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MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

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Circe. From painting by Henri Motte.

THE WORKS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

AN ESSAY BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- CIRCE. From Painting by Henri Motte. . . . . Frontispiece
- ULYSSES AND THE SIRENS. From Painting by Leon-Auguste-Adolphe Belly. . . . . Page 28
- GOD AND THE MORTAL. From Painting by Jean Le Comte-DuNony . . Page 90
- JUDGMENT OF MIDAS. From Painting by Theodor Grosse . . . . . Page 228

ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

APOLOGY FOR RAIMOND DE SEBONDE (*Continued.*)

AS TO magnanimity, it will be hard to give a better instance of this than in the example of the great dog sent to Alexander the Great from India. They first brought him a stag to encounter, next a boar, and after that a bear; all these he slighted, and disdained to stir from his place; but when he saw a lion, he immediately roused himself, evidently manifesting that he declared that alone worthy to enter the lists with him. As to what concerns repentance and the acknowledgment of faults, ’tis reported of an elephant, that having, in the impetuosity of his rage, killed his keeper, he fell into so extreme a sorrow that he would never after eat, but starved himself to death. And as to clemency, ’tis said of a tiger, the most inhuman of all beasts, that a kid having been put in to him, he suffered two days’ hunger rather than hurt it, and on the third day broke the cage he was shut up in, to go seek elsewhere for prey, not choosing to fall upon the kid, his friend and guest. And as to the laws of familiarity and agreement, formed by converse, it commonly occurs that we bring up cats, dogs, and hares tame together.

But that which seamen experimentally know, and particularly in the Sicilian sea, of the quality of the halcyons, surpasses all human thought: of what kind of animal has nature so highly honored the hatching, birth, and production? The poets, indeed, say that the Island of Delos, which before was a floating island, was fixed for the service of Latona’s lying-in; but the gods ordered that the whole ocean should be stayed, made stable and smoothed, without waves, without wind or rain, whilst the halcyon lays her eggs, which is just about the Solstice, the shortest day of the year, so that, by this halcyon’s privilege, we have seven days and seven nights in the very heart of winter, wherein we may sail without danger. Their females never have to do with any other male but their own, whom they always accompany (without ever forsaking him) all their lives; if he happen to be weak and broken with age, they take him upon their shoulders, carry him from place to place, and serve him till death. But the most inquisitive into the secrets of nature could never yet arrive at the knowledge of the marvellous fabric wherewith the halcyon builds the nest for her little ones, nor guess at the matter. Plutarch, who had seen and handled many of them, thinks it is the bones of some fish which she joins and binds together, interlacing them some lengthwise and others across, and adding ribs and

hoops in such a manner that she forms, at last, a round vessel fit to launch, which being done, and the building finished, she carries it to the wash of the beach, where the sea beating gently against it, shows her where she is to mend what is not well jointed and knit, and where better to fortify the seams that are leaky and that open at the beating of the waves; and, on the contrary, what is well built and has had the due finishing, the beating of the waves so closes and binds together that it is not to be broken or cracked by blows, either of stone or iron, without very much ado. And that which is still more to be admired is the proportion and figure of the cavity within, which is composed and proportioned after such a manner as not possibly to receive or admit any other thing than the bird that built it; for to anything else it is so impenetrable, close, and shut, that nothing can enter, not so much as the water of the sea. This is a very clear description of this building, and borrowed from a very good hand; and yet methinks it does not give us sufficient light into the difficulty of this architecture. Now, from what vanity can it proceed to place lower than ourselves, and disdainfully to interpret effects that we can neither imitate nor comprehend?

To pursue a little further this equality and correspondence betwixt us and beasts: the privilege our soul so much glorifies herself upon of bringing all things she conceives to her own condition, of stripping all things that come to her of their mortal and corporal qualities, of ordering and placing the things she conceives worthy her taking notice of, divesting them of their corruptible qualities, and making them lay aside length, breadth, depth, weight, color, smell, roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, and all sensible incidents, as mean and superfluous vestments, to accommodate them to her own immortal and spiritual condition: the Paris, just as Rome and Paris, that I have in my soul, the Paris that I imagine, I imagine and conceive it without greatness and without place, without stone, without plaster, without wood: this very same privilege, I say, seems to be evidently in beasts: for a horse, accustomed to trumpets, the rattle of musket-shot and the bustle of battles, whom we see start and tremble in his sleep stretched upon his litter, as if he were in fight, it is certain that he conceives in his soul the beat of drum without noise, an army without arms and without body:—

> *“You shall see strong horses, however, when they lie down in sleep, often sweat, and snort, and seem as if, with all their force, they were striving to win the race.”*

The hare that a harrier imagines in his dream, after which we see him so pant whilst he sleeps, so stretch out his tail, shake his legs, and perfectly represent all the motions of his course, is a hare without skin and without bones:—

> *"Hounds often in their quiet rest suddenly throw out their legs and bark, and breathe quick and short, as if they were in full chase upon a burning scent: nay, being waked, pursue visionary stags, as if they had them in real view, till at last, discovering the mistake, they return to themselves."*

We often observe the watchdogs growl in their dreams and afterward bark out, and start up on a sudden, as if they perceived some stranger at hand: this stranger, that their soul discerns, is a spiritual and imperceptible man, without dimension, without color, and without being:—

> *"Often our caressing house-dogs, shaking slumber from their eyes, will rise up suddenly, as if they see strange faces."*

As to beauty of the body, before I proceed any further, I would know whether or not we are agreed about the description. 'Tis likely we do not well know what beauty is in nature and in general, since to human and our own beauty we give so many diverse forms, of which were there any natural rule and prescription we should know it in common, as we do the heat of the fire. But we fancy its forms according to our own appetite and liking:—

> *"The Belgic complexion is base in contrast to a Roman face."*

Indians paint it black and tawny, with great swollen lips, big flat noses, and load the cartilage betwixt the nostrils with great rings of gold to make it hang down to the mouth; as also the nether lip with great hoops, enriched with jewels, that weigh them down to fall upon the chin, it being with them a special grace to show their teeth even below the roots. In Peru, the greatest ears are the most beautiful, and they stretch them out as far as they can by art; and a man, now living, says that he has seen in an Eastern nation this care of enlarging them in so great repute, and the ear laden with such ponderous jewels, that he did with great ease put his arm, sleeve and all, through the bore of an ear. There are, elsewhere, nations that take great care to blacken their teeth, and hate to see them white; elsewhere, people that paint them red. Not only in Biscay, but in other places, the women are reputed more beautiful for having their heads shaved, and this, moreover, in certain frozen countries, as Pliny reports. The Mexican women reckon

among beauties a low forehead, and though they shave all other parts, they nourish hair on the forehead and increase it by art, and have large teats in such great reputation, that they make boast to give their children suck over their shoulders. We should paint deformity so. The Italians fashion beauty gross and massive: the Spaniards, gaunt and slender; and among us one makes it white, another brown: one soft and delicate, another strong and vigorous; one will have his mistress soft and gentle, another haughty and majestic. Just as the preference in beauty is given by Plato to the spherical figure, the Epicureans give it to the pyramidal or the square, and cannot swallow a god in the form of a ball. But, be it how it will, nature has no more privileged us above her common laws in this than in the rest; and if we will judge ourselves aright, we shall find that if there be some animals less favored in this than we, there are others, and in great number, that are more so:—

"Many animals surpass us in beauty,"

even of our terrestrial compatriots; for, as to those of the sea, setting the figure aside, which cannot fall into any manner of comparison, being so wholly another thing, in color, cleanness, smoothness, and disposition, we sufficiently give place to them; and no less, in all qualities, to the aerial. And this prerogative that the poets make such a mighty matter of, our erect stature, looking towards heaven, our original:—

"Whereas other animals bow their prone looks to the earth, he gave it to men to look erect, to behold the heavenly arch,"

is merely poetical; for there are several little beasts that have their sight absolutely turned towards heaven; and I find the countenance of camels and ostriches much higher raised, and more erect than ours. What animals have not their faces forward and in front, and do not look just as we do, and do not in their natural posture discover as much of heaven and earth as man? And what qualities of our bodily constitution, in Plato and Cicero, may not indifferently serve a thousand sorts of beasts? Those that most resemble us are the ugliest and most abject of all the herd; for, as to outward appearance and form of visage, such are the baboons and monkeys:—

"How like to us is that basest of beasts, the ape?"

and, for the internal and vital parts, the hog. In earnest, when I imagine man stark naked, even that sex that seems to have the greatest share of beauty, his defects, natural subjections, and imperfections, I find that we have more reason than any other animal to cover ourselves. We are readily

to be excused for borrowing of those creatures to which nature has in this been kinder than to us, to trick ourselves with their beauties and hide ourselves under their spoils—their wool, feathers, hair, silk. Let us observe, as to the rest, that man is the sole animal whose nudities offend his own companions, and the only one who, in his natural actions, withdraws and hides himself from his own kind. And really, ’tis also an effect worth consideration, that they, who are masters in the trade, prescribe as a remedy for amorous passions the full and free view of the body a man desires; so that, to cool his ardor, there needs no more but full liberty to see and contemplate what he loves:—

“He that in full ardor has disclosed to him the secret parts of his mistress in open view, flags in his hot career:”

and although this recipe may, peradventure, proceed from a refined and cold humor, it is, notwithstanding, a very great sign of our weakness, that use and acquaintance should disgust us with one another.

It is not modesty so much as cunning and prudence, that makes our ladies so circumspect in refusing us admittance to their closets, before they are painted and tricked up for public view:—

“Nor does this escape our beauties, insomuch that they with such care behind the scenes remove all those defects that may check the flame of their lovers:”

whereas in several animals there is nothing that we do not love, and that does not please our senses; so that from their very excrements we not only extract wherewith to heighten our sauces, but also our richest ornaments and perfumes. This discourse reflects upon none but the ordinary sort of women, and is not so sacrilegious as to seek to comprehend those divine, supernatural, and extraordinary beauties, whom we occasionally see shining amongst us like stars under a corporeal and terrestrial veil.

As to the rest, the very share that we allow to beasts of the bounty of nature, by our own confession, is very much to their advantage: we attribute to ourselves imaginary and fantastic goods, future and absent goods, for which human capacity cannot, of herself, be responsible; or goods that we falsely attribute to ourselves by the license of opinion, as reason, knowledge, and honor; and leave to them, for their share, essential, manageable, and palpable goods, as peace, repose, security, innocence, and health: health, I say, the fairest and richest present that nature can make us. Insomuch that philosophy, even the Stoic, is so bold as to say that

Heraclitus and Pherecides, could they have exchanged their wisdom for health, and had delivered themselves, the one of his dropsy and the other of the lice disease that tormented him by the bargain they had done well. By which they set a still greater value upon wisdom, comparing and putting it in the balance with health, than they do in this other proposition, which is also theirs: they say that if Circe had presented to Ulysses two potions, the one to make a fool become a wise man, and the other to make a wise man become a fool, Ulysses ought rather to have chosen the last than to consent that Circe should change his human figure into that of a beast; and say that wisdom itself would have spoken to him after this manner: “Forsake me, let me alone, rather than lodge me under the figure and body of an ass.” How, then, will the philosophers abandon this great and divine wisdom for this corporeal and terrestrial covering? it is then not by reason, by discourse, by the soul, that we excel beasts: ’tis by our beauty, our fair complexion, our fine symmetry of parts, for which we must quit our intelligence, our prudence, and all the rest. Well, I accept this frank and free confession: certainly, they knew that those parts upon which we so much value ourselves are no other than vain fancy. If beasts, then, had all the virtue, knowledge, wisdom, and Stoical perfection, they would still be beasts, and would not be comparable to man, miserable, wicked, insensate man. For, in fine, whatever is not as we are is nothing worth; and God Himself to procure esteem amongst us must put Himself into that shape, as we shall show anon: by which it appears that it is not upon any true ground of reason, but by a foolish pride and vain opinion, that we prefer ourselves before other animals, and separate ourselves from their condition and society.

But, to return to what I was upon before, we have for our part inconstancy, irresolution, incertitude, sorrow, superstition, solicitude about things to come even after we shall be no more, ambition, avarice, jealousy, envy, irregular, frantic, and untamable appetites, war, lying, disloyalty, detraction, and curiosity. Doubtless, we have strangely overpaid this fine reason upon which we so much glorify ourselves, and this capacity of judging and knowing, if we have bought it at the price of this infinite number of passions to which we are eternally subject: unless we shall yet think fit, as Socrates does, to add this notable prerogative above beasts, that whereas nature has prescribed to them certain seasons and limits for the delights of Venus, she has given us the reins at all hours and all seasons:—

“As it falls out that wine seldom benefits the sick man, and very often injures him, it is better not to give them any at all than out of hope of an uncertain benefit to incur a sure mischief: so I know not whether it had not been better for mankind that this quick motion, this acumen of imagination, this subtlety, that we call reason, had not been given to man at all; since what harms many, and benefits few, had better have not been bestowed, than bestowed with so prodigal a hand.”

Of what advantage can we conceive the knowledge of so many things was to Varro and Aristotle? Did it exempt them from human inconveniences? Were they by it freed from the accidents that lie heavy upon the shoulders of a porter? Did they extract from their logic any consolation for the gout? or, from knowing that this humor is lodged in the joints, did they feel it the less? Did they enter into composition with death by knowing that some nations rejoice at his approach? or with cuckoldry, by knowing that in some part of the world wives are in common? On the contrary, having been reputed the greatest men for knowledge, the one amongst the Romans and the other amongst the Greeks, and in a time when learning most flourished, we have not heard, nevertheless, that they had any particular excellence in their lives: nay, the Greek had enough to do to clear himself from some notable blemishes in his. Have we observed that pleasure and health have had a better relish with him who understands astrology and grammar than with others?

“Do the veins of the illiterate swell less freely?”

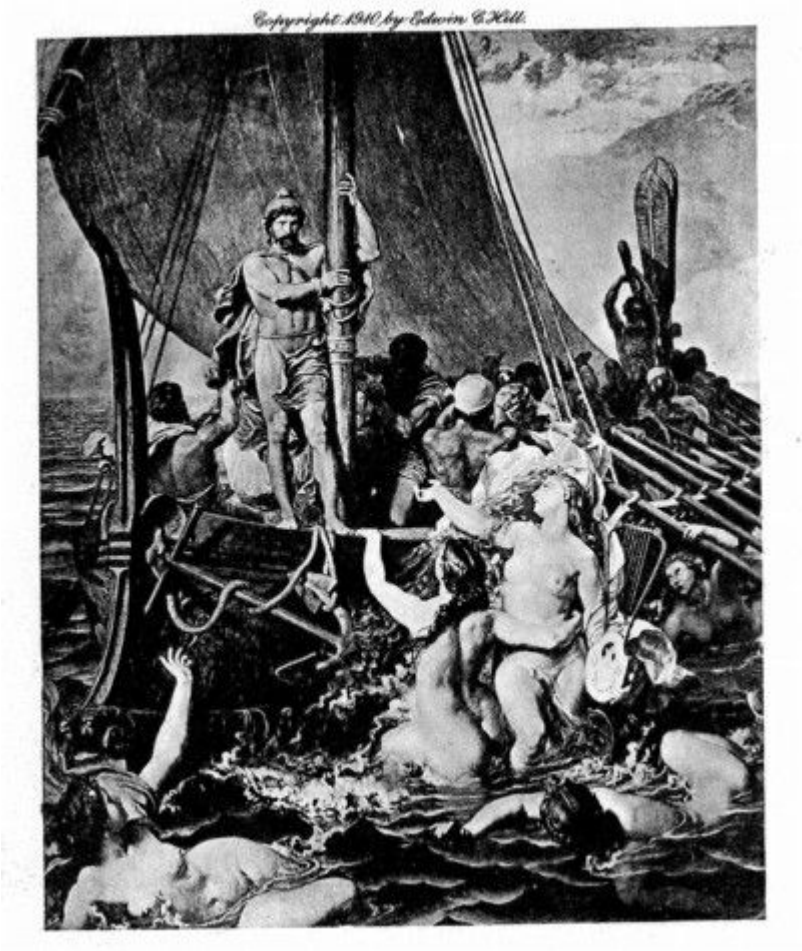
and shame and poverty less troublesome?

“Thou shalt be free from disease and infirmity, and avoid care and sorrow; and thy life shall be prolonged, and with better days.”

I have known in my time a hundred artisans, a hundred laborers, wiser and more happy than the rectors of the university, and whom I had much rather have resembled. Learning, methinks, has its place amongst the necessary things of life, as glory, nobility, dignity, or, at the most, as beauty, riches, and such other qualities, which, indeed, are useful to it; but remotely and more by fantasy than by nature. We need scarcely more offices, rules, and laws of living in our society than cranes and emmets do in theirs; and yet we see that these live very regularly without erudition. If man were wise, he would take the true value of everything according as it was most useful and proper to his life. Whoever will number us by our actions and

deportments, will find many more excellent men amongst the ignorant than among the learned: aye, in all sorts of virtue. The old Rome seems to me to have been of much greater value, both for peace and war, than that learned Rome that ruined itself; and though all the rest should be equal, yet integrity and innocence would remain to the ancients, for they inhabit singularly well with simplicity. But I will leave this discourse that would lead me farther than I am willing to follow; and shall only say this farther: ’tis only humility and submission that can make a complete good man. We are not to leave to each man’s own judgment the knowledge of his duty; we are to prescribe it to him, and not suffer him to choose it at his own discretion: otherwise, according to the imbecility and infinite variety of our reasons and opinions, we should at last forge for ourselves duties that would (as Epicurus says) enjoin us to eat one another.

The first law that ever God gave to man was a law of pure obedience: it was a commandment naked and simple, wherein man had nothing to inquire after or to dispute, forasmuch as to obey is the proper office of a rational soul, acknowledging a heavenly superior and benefactor. From obedience and submission spring all other virtues, as all sin does from self-opinion. And, on the contrary, the first temptation that by the devil was offered to human nature, its first poison, insinuated itself by the promises that were made to us of knowledge and wisdom:—



Ulysses and the Sirens. From painting by Leon-Auguste-Adolphe Belly.

“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

And the Syrens, in Homer, to allure Ulysses and draw him within the danger of their snares, offered to give him knowledge. The plague of man is the opinion of wisdom; and for this reason it is that ignorance is so recommended to us by our religion, as proper to faith and obedience:—

> *“Take heed lest any man deceive you by philosophy and vain seductions according to the first principles of the world.”*

There is in this a general consent amongst all sects of philosophers, that the sovereign good consists in the tranquillity of the soul and body: but where shall we find it?—

> *“He that is wise is one degree inferior only to Jove; free, honored, fair, in short, a king of kings; above all, in health, unless when the phlegm is troublesome.”*

It seems, in truth, that nature, for the consolation of our miserable and wretched state, has only given us presumption for our inheritance; ’tis, as Epictetus says, “that man has nothing properly his own, but the use of his opinions;” we have nothing but wind and smoke for our portion. The gods have health in essence, says philosophy, and sickness in intelligence; man, on the contrary, possesses his goods by fancy, his ills in essence. We have had reason to magnify the power of our imagination, for all our goods are only in dream. Hear this poor calamitous animal huff: “There is nothing,” says Cicero, “so charming as the occupation of letters; of those letters, I say, by means whereof the infinity of things, the immense grandeur of nature, the heavens, even in this world, the earth, and the seas are discovered to us. ’Tis they that have taught us religion, moderation, the grandeur of courage, and that have rescued our souls from obscurity, to make her see all things, high, low, first, middle, last, and ’tis they that furnish us wherewith to live happily and well, and conduct us to pass over our lives without displeasure and without offence.” Does not this man seem to speak of the condition of the ever-living and almighty God? Yet, as to the effect, a thousand little country-women have lived lives more equal, more sweet and constant than his:—

> *“That god, great Memmus, was a god indeed, who first found out that rationale of life which is now called wisdom; and who by such art removed life from its tempests and darkness into so calm and clear a light.”*

Here are very fine, very brave words; but a very light accident put this same man’s understanding in a worse condition that that of the meanest shepherd, notwithstanding this instructing God, this divine wisdom. Of the same stamp of impudence is the promise of Democritus’s book, “I am going to speak of all things;” and that foolish title that Aristotle prefixes to one of his, “of the mortal gods,” and the judgment of Chrysippus, “that Dion was as virtuous as God;” and my friend Seneca does indeed acknowledge that God has given him life, but that to live well is his own, conformably with this other:—

> *“We truly glory in our virtue, which would not be if we had it as a gift from God and not from ourselves;”*

this is also Seneca’s saying, “That the wise man has fortitude equal with God; but in human frailty, wherein he surpasses Him.” There is nothing so ordinary as to meet with sallies of the like temerity; there is none

of us who takes so much offence to see himself equalled to God, as he does to see himself undervalued by being ranked with other animals; so much more are we jealous of our own interest, than of that of our Creator. But we must trample under foot this foolish vanity, and briskly and boldly shake the ridiculous foundations upon which these false opinions are based. So long as man shall believe he has any means and power of himself, he will never acknowledge what he owes to his Master; his eggs shall always be chickens, as the saying is; we must therefore strip him to his shirt. Let us see some notable example of the effect of his philosophy. Posidonius, being tormented with a disease so painful as made him writhe his arms and gnash his teeth, thought he sufficiently baffled the pain by crying out against it: "Thou dost exercise thy malice to much purpose; I will not confess that thou art an evil." He is as sensible of the pain as my lacquey; but he mightily values himself upon bridling his tongue at least, and restraining it within the laws of his sect:—

"It did not belong to him, vaunting in words, to give way to the thing itself."

Arcesilaus, being ill of the gout, and Carneades coming to see him, was returning, troubled at his condition; the other calling back and showing him his feet and then his breast: "There is nothing come from these hither," said he. This has somewhat a better grace, for he feels himself in pain, and would be disengaged from it; but his heart, notwithstanding, is not conquered or enfeebled by it; the other stands more obstinately to his work, but, I fear, rather verbally than really. And Dionysius Heracleotes, afflicted with a vehement smarting in his eyes, was reduced to quit these stoical resolutions. But, though knowledge could in effect do, as they say, and could blunt the point and dull the edge of the misfortunes that attend us, what does she more than what ignorance does more simply and evidently? The philosopher Pyrrho, being at sea in very great danger by reason of a mighty storm, presented nothing to those who were with him to imitate in this extremity but the security of a hog they had on board, that was looking at the tempest quite unconcerned. Philosophy, when she has said all she can, refers us at last to the example of a wrestler or a muleteer, in which sort of people we commonly observe much less apprehension of death or sense of pain and other infirmities, and more endurance, than ever knowledge furnished any one with who was not born to those infirmities, and of himself prepared for them by a natural habit. What is the cause that we

make incisions and cut the tender limbs of an infant, and those of a horse, more easily than our own, but ignorance only? How many has mere force of imagination made ill. We often see men cause themselves to be let blood, purged, and physicked, to be cured of diseases they only feel in opinion. When real infirmities fail us, knowledge lends us hers: that color, this complexion, portends some catarrhous defluxion; this hot season threatens us with a fever: this breach in the lifeline of your left hand gives you notice of some near and notable indisposition: and at last it roundly attacks health itself, saying, this sprightliness and vigor of youth cannot continue in this posture, there must be blood taken, and the fever abated, lest it turn to your prejudice. Compare the life of a man subject to such imaginations with that of a laborer who suffers himself to be led by his natural appetite, measuring things only by the present sense, without knowledge and without prognostics—who is only ill when he is ill; whereas the other has the stone in his soul before he has it in his bladder; as if it were not time enough to suffer evil when it shall come, he must anticipate it by fancy and run to meet it. What I say of physic may generally serve as example in other sciences: and hence is derived that ancient opinion of the philosophers, who placed the sovereign good in discerning the weakness of our judgment. My ignorance affords me as much occasion of hope as of fear; and having no other rule of my health than that of the examples of others, and of events I see elsewhere upon the like occasion, I find of all sorts, and rely upon the comparisons that are most favorable to me. I receive health with open arms, free, full, and entire, and by so much the more whet my appetite to enjoy it, by how much it is at present less ordinary and more rare: so far am I from troubling its repose and sweetness, with the bitterness of a new and constrained manner of living. Beasts sufficiently show us how much the agitation of the soul brings infirmities and diseases upon us. That which is told us of the people of Brazil, that they never die but of old age, is attributed to the serenity and tranquillity of the air they live in; but I attribute it to the serenity and tranquillity of their soul, free from all passion, thought, or employments, continuous or unpleasing, as people that pass over their lives in an admirable simplicity and ignorance, without letters, without law, without king, or any manner of religion. Whence comes this which we find by experience, that the coarsest and most rough-hewn clowns are the most able and the most to be desired in amorous performances, and that the love of a muleteer often renders itself more

acceptable than that of a gentleman, if it be not that the agitation of the soul in the latter disturbs his corporal ability, dissolves and tires it, as it also troubles and tires itself? What more usually puts the soul beside herself, and throws her into madness, than her own promptness, vigor, and agility—in short, her own proper force? Of what is the most subtle folly made, but of the most subtle wisdom? As great friendships spring from great enmities, and vigorous healths from mortal diseases: so from the rare and quick agitations of our souls proceed the most wonderful and wildest frenzies; ’tis but a half turn of the toe from the one to the other:

“Great wits to madness, sure, are near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.”

In the actions of madmen, we see how nearly madness resembles the most vigorous operations of the soul. Who does not know how indiscernible the difference is betwixt madness and the gay flights of a sprightly soul, and the effects of a supreme and extraordinary virtue? Plato says, that melancholic persons are the most capable of discipline and the most excellent; nor, indeed, is there in any so great a propension to madness. Infinite wits are ruined by their own proper force and suppleness: to what a condition, through his own excitable fancy, has one of the most judicious, ingenious, and best-informed to the ancient, and true poesy, of any of the Italian poets lately fallen! Has he not great obligation to this fatal vivacity, to this light that has blinded him? to this exact and subtle apprehension of reason, that has put him beside his reason, to his close and laborious search after the sciences, that has reduced him to stupidity, to that rare aptitude to the exercises of the soul, that has rendered him without exercise and without soul. I had more chagrin, if possible, than compassion, to see him at Ferrara in so pitiful a condition surviving himself, forgetting both himself and his works, which, without his knowledge, though before his face, have been published, deformed and incorrect.

Would you have a man sound, would you have him regular, and in a steady and secure posture? muffle him up in the shades of stupidity and sloth. We must be made beasts to be made wise, and hoodwinked before we can govern ourselves. And if one shall tell me that the advantage of having a cold and blunted sense of pain and other evils, brings this disadvantage along with it, to render us, consequently, less eager and sensible also in the fruition of goods and pleasures; this is true: but the misery of our condition

is such that we have not so much to enjoy as to avoid, and that the extremest pleasure does not affect us to the degree that a light grief does:—

"Men are less sensitive to pleasure than to pain."

We are not so sensible of the most perfect health, as we are of the least sickness:—

"The body is vexed with a little sting that scarcely penetrates the skin, while the most perfect health is not perceived. This only pleases me, that neither side nor foot is plagued; except these, scarce any one can tell, whether he's in health or no."

Our well-being is nothing but the privation of ill-being; and this is the reason why that sect of philosophers which sets the greatest value upon pleasure, has fixed it chiefly in insensibility of pain. To be free from ill is the greatest good that man can hope for, as Ennius says:—

"Nimium boni est, cui nihil est mali;"

for that very tickling and sting which are in certain pleasures, and that seem to raise us above simple health and insensibility: that active, moving, and, I know not how, itching and biting pleasure, even that very pleasure itself looks to nothing but apathy as its mark. The lust, that carries us headlong to women's embraces, is directed to no other end but only to cure the torment of our ardent and furious desires, and only requires to be glutted and laid at rest, and delivered from that fever; and so of the rest. I say then that, if simplicity conducts us to a state free from evil, it leads us to a very happy one, according to our condition. And yet we are not to imagine it so leaden an insensibility as to be totally without sense: for Crantor had very good reason to controvert the insensibility of Epicurus, if founded so deep that the very first attack and birth of evils were not to be perceived. "I do not approve such an insensibility as is neither possible nor to be desired: I am well content not to be sick; but, if I am, I would know that I am so; and if a caustic be applied or incisions made in any part, I would feel them." In truth, whoever would take away the knowledge and sense of evil, would, at the same time, eradicate the sense of pleasure, and, in short, annihilate man himself:—

"An insensibility, that is not to be purchased but at the price of the humanity of the soul and of stupidity in the body."

Evil appertains to man in its turn; neither is pain always to be avoided, nor pleasure always pursued.

’Tis a great advantage to the honor of ignorance that knowledge itself throws us into its arms when she finds herself puzzled to fortify us against the weight of evils; she is constrained to come to this composition, to give us the reins, and permit us to fly into the lap of the other, and to shelter ourselves under her protection from the strokes and injuries of fortune. For what else is her meaning when she instructs us to divert our thoughts from the ills that press upon us, and entertain them with the meditation of pleasures past and gone; to comfort ourselves in present afflictions with the remembrance of fled delights, and to call to our succor a vanished satisfaction, to oppose it to what lies heavy upon us?—

> *“The way to dissipate present grief is to recall to contemplation past pleasures,”*

if it be not that where power fails her she will supply it with policy, and make use of a supple trip, when force of limbs will not serve the turn? For not only to a philosopher, but to any man in his right wits, when he has upon him the thirst of a burning fever, what satisfaction can it be to remember the pleasure of drinking Greek wine? it would rather be to make matters worse:—

> *“The remembrance of pleasure doubles the sense of present pain.”*

Of the same stamp is the other counsel that philosophy gives; only to remember past happiness and to forget the troubles we have undergone; as if we had the science of oblivion in our power: ’tis a counsel for which we are never a straw the better:—

> *“The memory of past toils is sweet.”*

How? Is philosophy, that should arm me to contend with fortune, and steel my courage to trample all human adversities under foot, arrived at this degree of cowardice, to make me hide my head and save myself by these pitiful and ridiculous shifts? for the memory presents to us not what we choose but what it pleases; nay, there is nothing that so much imprints anything in our memory as a desire to forget it: and ’tis a sure way to retain and keep anything safe in the soul, to solicit her to lose it. This is false:—

> *“And it is placed in our power to bury, as it were, in a perpetual oblivion adverse accidents, and to retain a pleasant and delightful memory of our successes;”*

and this is true:—

“I even remember what I would not; but I cannot forget what I would.”

And whose counsel is this? his:—

“Who alone dares to profess himself a wise man (Epicurus).”

“Who all mankind surpassed in genius, effacing them as the rising sun puts out the stars.”

To empty and disfurnish the memory, is not this the true and proper way to ignorance?—

“Ignorance is but a dull remedy for evils.”

We find several other like precepts whereby we are permitted to borrow from the vulgar frivolous appearances where reason, in all her vivacity and vigor, cannot do the feat, provided they administer satisfaction and comfort; where they cannot cure the wound, they are content to palliate and benumb it. I believe they will not deny me this, that if they could establish order and constancy in a state of life that could maintain itself in ease and pleasure by some debility of judgment, they would accept it:—

“I will begin to drink and strew flowers, and will suffer to be thought mad.”

There would be a great many philosophers of Lycas’ mind: this man being otherwise of very regular manners, living quietly and contentedly in his family, and not failing in any office of his duty, either towards his own people or strangers, and very carefully preserving himself from hurtful things, was nevertheless, by some distemper in his brain, possessed with a conceit that he was perpetually in the theatre, viewing the several entertainments, and enjoying the amusements and the shows and the best comedies in the world; and being cured by the physicians of his frenzy, had much ado to forbear endeavoring by process of law to compel them to restore him again to his pleasing imaginations:—

“By heaven! you have killed me, my friends, not saved me, he said; my dear delights and pleasing error by my returning sense are taken from me:”

with a madness like that of Thrasyllus, son of Pythodorus, who had grown to believe that all the ships that weighed anchor from the port of Piraeus and that came into the haven, only made their voyages for his profit, congratulating himself on their happy navigation, and receiving them with the greatest joy. His brother Crito having caused him to be restored to his better understanding, he infinitely regretted that sort of condition wherein

he had lived with so much delight and free from all anxiety. ’Tis according to the old Greek verse, “that there is a great deal of convenience in not being so prudent:”—

And Ecclesiastes, “In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”

Even that to which philosophy consents in general, that last remedy which she applies to all sorts of necessities, to put an end to the life we are not able to endure:—

“Does it please? bear it. Not please? go out, how thou wilt. Does grief prick thee? nay, if it stab thee too: if thou art weaponless, present thy throat: if covered with the arms of Vulcan, that is fortitude, resist it.”

and these words so used in the Greek festivals:—

“Let him drink or go;”

that sound better upon the tongue of a Gascon, who naturally changes the b into v, than upon that of Cicero:—

“If thou canst not live right, give place to those that can; thou hast eaten, drunk, amused thyself to thy content; ’tis time to make departure, lest, being overdosed, the young ones first laugh at thee, and then turn thee out.”

What is it other than a confession of his impotency, and a retreating not only to ignorance, to be there in safety, but even to stupidity, insensibility, and nonentity?—

“So soon as, through age, Democritus found a manifest decadence in his mind, he himself went to meet death.”

’Tis what Antisthenes said, “That a man must either make provision of sense to understand, or of a halter to hang himself;” and what Chrysippus alleged upon this saying of the poet Tyrtaeus, “Or to arrive at virtue or at death:” and Crates said, “That love could be cured by hunger, if not by time; and if a man disliked these two remedies, by a rope.” That Sextius of whom both Seneca and Plutarch speak with so high an encomium, having applied himself (all other things set aside) to the study of philosophy, resolved to throw himself into the sea, finding the progress of his studies too tedious and slow. He ran to find death, since he could not overtake knowledge. These are the words of the law upon this subject: “If, peradventure, some great inconvenience happen, for which there is no remedy, the haven is near, and a man may save himself by swimming out of

his body, as out of a leaky skiff; for ’tis the fear of dying, and not the love of life, that ties the fool to his body.”

As life renders itself by simplicity more pleasant, so, also, more innocent and better, as I was saying before. The simple and ignorant, says St. Paul, raise themselves up to heaven, and take possession of it; and we, with all our knowledge, plunge ourselves into the infernal abyss. I am neither swayed by Valentinian, a professed enemy to all knowledge and literature; nor by Licinus, both Roman emperors, who called them the poison and pest of all politic government; nor by Mahomet, who, as I have heard, interdicted all manner of learning to his followers, but the example of the great Lycurgus and his authority, with the reverence of the divine Lacedaemonian policy, so great, so admirable, and so long flourishing in virtue and happiness without any institution or practice of letters, ought, certainly, to be of very great weight. Such as return from the new world discovered by the Spaniards in our fathers’ days can testify to us how much more honestly and regularly those nations live, without magistrate and without laws, than ours do, where there are more officers and laws than there are other sorts of men, or than there are lawsuits:—

- “Her lap was full of writs and of citations,
- Of process of actions and arrest,
- Of bills, of answers, and of replications,
- In Courts of Delegates and of Requests,
- To grieve the simple with great vexations:
- She had resorting to her as her guests,
- Attending on her circuits and her journeys,
- Scriveners and clerks, and lawyers and attorneys.”

It was what a Roman senator said of the later ages, that their predecessors’ breath stank of garlic, but their stomachs were perfumed with a good conscience; and that on the contrary, those of his time were all sweet odor without, but stank within of all sorts of vices; that is to say, as I interpret it, that they abounded with learning and eloquence, but were very defective in moral honesty. Incivility, ignorance, simplicity, roughness, are the natural companions of innocence; curiosity, subtlety, and knowledge bring malice in their train: humility, fear, obedience, and affability, which are the principal things that support and maintain human society, require an

empty and docile soul, and little presuming upon itself. Christians have a special knowledge how natural and original an evil curiosity is in man: the thirst of knowledge, and the desire to become more wise, was the first ruin of human kind, and the way by which it precipitated itself into eternal damnation. Pride is his ruin and corruption: ’tis pride that diverts him from the common path, and makes him embrace novelties, and rather choose to be head of a troop, lost and wandering in the path of perdition, to be tutor and teacher of error and lies, than to be a disciple in the school of truth, suffering himself to be led and guided by the hand of another, in the right and beaten road. ’Tis, peradventure, the meaning of this old Greek saying: “That superstition follows pride and obeys it as if it were a father.” O presumption, how much dost thou hinder us!

After that Socrates was told that the god of wisdom had attributed to him the title of sage, he was astonished at it, and searching and examining himself throughout, could find no foundation for this divine decree: he knew others as just, temperate, valiant, and learned as himself, and more eloquent, handsome, and more profitable to their country than he. At last, he concluded that he was not distinguished from others nor wise, but only because he did not think himself so, and that his god considered the self-opinion of knowledge and wisdom as a singular stupidity of man; and that his best doctrine was the doctrine of ignorance, and simplicity his best wisdom. The sacred word declares those miserable who have an opinion of themselves: “Dust and ashes,” says it to such, “what hast thou wherein to glorify thyself?” And in another place, “God has made man like unto a shadow,” of which who can judge, when by the removing of the light it shall be vanished? It is nothing but of us.

Our strength is so far from being able to comprehend the divine height, that of the works of our Creator those best bear His mark and are best His which we the least understand. To meet with an incredible thing, is an occasion with Christians to believe. It is all the more reason that it is against human reason; if it were according to reason, it would no longer be a miracle; if it had an example, it would be no longer a singular thing:—

“God is better known by not knowing.”

says St. Augustin; and Tacitus:

“It is more holy and reverend to believe the works of the gods than to know them;”

and Plato thinks there is something of impiety in inquiring too curiously into God, the world, and the first causes of things:—

"To find out the parent of the world, is very hard: and when found out, to reveal him in common, is unlawful,"

says Cicero. We pronounce, indeed, power, truth, justice, which are words that signify some great thing; but that thing we neither see nor conceive. We say that God fears, that God is angry, that God loves:—

"Speaking of things immortal in mortal language,"

which are all agitations and emotions that cannot be in God, according to our form, nor can we imagine it, according to His. It only belongs to God to know Himself, and to interpret His own works; and He does it, in our language, to stoop and descend to us who grovel upon the earth. How can Prudence, which is the choice betwixt good and evil, be properly attributed to Him, whom no evil can touch? How the reason and intelligence, which we make use of, so as by obscure to arrive at apparent things, seeing that nothing is obscure to Him? and justice, which distributes to every one what appertains to Him, a thing created by the society and community of men: how is that in God? how temperance? how the moderation of corporal pleasures, that have no place in the divinity? Fortitude to support pain, labor, and dangers as little appertains to Him as the rest, these three things having no access to Him: for which reason Aristotle holds Him equally exempt from grace and anger:—

"He can be affected neither with favor nor indignation, because both those are the effects of frailty."

The participation we have in the knowledge of truth, such as it is, is not acquired by our own force: God has sufficiently given us to understand that by the testimony He has chosen out of the common people, simple and ignorant men, whom He has been pleased to employ to instruct us in His admirable secrets. Our faith is not of our own acquiring; 'tis purely the gift of another's bounty; 'tis not by meditation or by virtue of our own understanding that we have acquired our religion, but by foreign authority and command; the weakness of our judgment more assists us than force, and our blindness more than our clearness of sight; 'tis rather by the mediation of our ignorance than of our knowledge that we know anything of the divine Wisdom. 'Tis no wonder if our natural and earthly means cannot conceive that supernatural and heavenly knowledge: let us bring nothing of our own, but obedience and subjection; for, as it is written, "I

will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Should I examine finally, whether it be in the power of man to find out that which he seeks, and if that quest wherein he has busied himself so many ages has enriched him with any new force or any solid truth: I believe he will confess, if he speaks from his conscience, that all he has got by so long an inquisition is only to have learned to know his own weakness. We have only by long study confirmed and verified the natural ignorance we were in before. The same has fallen out to men truly wise which befall ears of corn; they shoot and raise their heads high and pert, whilst empty; but when full and swollen with grain in maturity, begin to flag and droop; so, men having tried and sounded all things, and having found in that accumulation of knowledge and provision of so many various things, nothing massive and firm, nothing but vanity, have quitted their presumption and acknowledged their natural condition. 'Tis what Velleius reproaches Cotta with and Cicero, that what they had learned of Philo was that they had learned nothing. Pherecydes, one of the seven sages, writing to Thales upon his deathbed: "I have," said he, "given order to my people, after my interment, to carry my writings to thee. If they please thee and the other sages, publish them; if not, suppress them. They contain no certainty with which I myself am satisfied. I pretend not to know the truth or to attain unto it; I rather open than discover things." The wisest man that ever was, being asked what he knew, made answer; he knew this, that he knew nothing. By which he verified what has been said, that the greatest part of what we know is the least of what we do not know, that is to say, that even what we think we know, is but a piece, and a very little one, of our ignorance. We know things in dreams, says Plato, and are ignorant of them in reality:— —

> *"Almost all the ancients declare, that nothing is perceived, nothing can be ascertained: that the senses are narrow, men's minds weak, the course of life short."*

And of Cicero himself, who stood indebted to his learning for all he was, Valerius says, that in his old age he began to disrelish letters, and when

most occupied with them, it was in independence of any party: following what he thought probable, now in one sect and then in another, evermore wavering under the doubts of the Academy:—

"I am to speak, but so that I affirm nothing: I will inquire into all things, for the most part in doubt, and distrustful of myself."

I should have too fine a game should I consider man in his common way of living and in gross: and yet I might do it by his own rule, who judges truth, not by the weight, but by the number of votes. Let us leave there the people:—

"Who waking snore! whose life is almost death, though living and seeing;"

who neither feel nor judge themselves, and let most of their natural faculties lie idle. I will take man in his highest state. Let us consider him in that small number of men, excellent and culled out from the rest, who having been endowed with a grand and special natural force, have, moreover, hardened and whetted it by care, study, and art, and raised it to the highest pitch of wisdom to which it can possibly arrive. They have adjusted their souls in all senses and all biases; have propped and supported them with all foreign helps proper for them, and enriched and adorned them with all they could borrow for their advantage, both within and without the world: these are they in whom is placed the supremest height to which human nature can attain. They have regulated the world with polities and laws; they have instructed it with arts and sciences, and further instructed it by the example of their admirable conduct. I shall make account of none but such men as these, their testimony and experience; let us examine how far they have proceeded, and on what they reposed their surest hold; the maladies and defects that we shall find amongst these men, the rest of the world may very boldly also declare to be their own.

Whoever goes in search of anything, must come to this, either to say that he has found it, or that it is not to be found, or that he is yet upon the quest. All philosophy is divided into these three kinds: her design is to seek out truth, knowledge, and certainty. The Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics, and others, have thought they had found it: these have established the sciences that we have, and have treated of them as of certainties. Clitomachus, Carneades, and the Academics, have despaired in their quest, and concluded that truth could not be conceived by our capacity; the result with these is all weakness and human ignorance; this sect has had the most

and most noble followers. Pyrrho and other sceptics or epichists, whose dogmas were held by many of the ancients to have been taken from Homer, the seven sages, Archilocus, Euripides, Zeno, Democritus, and Xenophanes, say, that they are yet upon the search of truth: these conclude that the others who think they have found it out are infinitely deceived; and that it is too daring a vanity in the second sort to determine that human reason is not able to attain unto it; for to establish the standard of our power, to know and judge the difficulty of things, is a great and extreme knowledge, of which they doubt whether man is capable:—

> *"If any one says that nothing is known, he also does not know whether it is knowable that he knows nothing."*

The ignorance that knows itself, judges, and condemns itself, is not an absolute ignorance: to be this, it must be ignorant of itself; so that the profession of the Pyrrhonians is to waver, doubt, and inquire, not to make themselves sure of or responsible to themselves for anything. Of the three actions of the soul, the imaginative, the appetitive, and the consenting, they receive the two first; the last they hold ambiguous, without inclination or approbation, one way or the other, however slight. Zeno represented by motion his imagination of these divisions of the faculties of the soul; an open and expanded hand signified Appearance: a hand half shut and the fingers a little bent, Consent: a clutched fist, Comprehension: when with the left hand he yet pressed the fist closer, Knowledge. Now this situation of their judgment, upright and inflexible, receiving all objects without application or consent, led them to their Ataraxy, which is a condition of life, peaceable, temperate, and exempt from the agitations we receive by the impression of the opinion and knowledge that we think we have of things; from which spring fear, avarice, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, love of novelty, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and the greatest part of bodily ills; nay, by this they exempt themselves from the jealousy of their discipline: for they debate after a very gentle manner; they fear no rejoinder in their disputes: when they affirm that heavy things descend, they would be sorry to be believed, and love to be contradicted, to engender doubt and suspense of judgment, which is their end. They only put out their propositions to contend with those they think we have in our belief. If you take their arguments, they will as readily maintain the contrary; 'tis all one to them; they have no choice. If you maintain that snow is black, they will argue, on the contrary, that it is white; if you say it

is neither the one nor the other, they will maintain that ’tis both. If you hold, as of certain judgment, that you know nothing of it, they will maintain that you do: yet, and if, by an affirmative axiom, you assure them that you doubt, they will argue against you that you doubt not, or that you cannot judge and determine that you doubt. And by this extremity of doubt, which jostles itself, they separate and divide themselves from many opinions, even of those that have several ways maintained doubt and ignorance. Why shall not they be allowed, say they, as well as the dogmatists, one to say green, another yellow; why may not they also doubt? Can anything be proposed to us to grant or deny which it shall not be permitted to consider as ambiguous? And where others are carried away, either by the custom of their country or by the instruction of parents, or by accident, as by a tempest, without judging and without choice, nay, and for the most part before the age of discretion, to such or such an opinion, to the sect of the Stoics or Epicureans, to which they are enslaved and fast bound, as to a thing they cannot shake off:—

> “*To whatever discipline they are carried, as by a tempest, they cleave to it as to a rock;*”

why shall not these likewise be permitted to maintain their liberty and to consider things without obligation or slavery?

> “*In this more unconstrained and free, that they have the full power of judging.*”

Is it not of some advantage to be disengaged from the necessity that curbs others? is it not better to remain in suspense than to entangle one’s self in the innumerable errors that human fancy has produced? is it not much better to suspend one’s persuasion than to intermeddle with these wrangling and seditious divisions? What shall I choose? “What you please, provided you do choose.” A very foolish answer, but one, nevertheless, to which all the dogmatists seem to point; by which we are not permitted to be ignorant of that of which we are ignorant. Take the most eminent side, that of the greatest reputation; it will never be so sure, that to defend it you will not be forced to attack and contend with a hundred and a hundred adversaries; is it not better to keep out of this hurly-burly? You are permitted to embrace, with as much zeal as honor and life, Aristotle’s opinion of the immortality of the soul, and to give the lie to Plato thereupon; and shall they be interdicted from doubting it? If it be lawful for Panaetius to maintain his opinion about augury, dreams, oracles,

vaticinations, of which things the Stoics make no doubt at all, why may not a wise man dare to do the same in all things which this man dared to do in those he had learned of his masters, and established by the common consent of the school whereof he is a professor and a member? If it be a child that judges, he knows not what it is: if a sage, he is prepossessed. They have reserved for themselves a marvellous advantage in battle, having eased themselves of the care of defence; if you strike them, ’tis no matter, provided they strike too; and they make everything serve their purpose; if they overcome, your argument is lame; if you, theirs: if they fail, they verify ignorance; if you fail, you do it: if they prove that nothing is known, it is well; if they cannot prove it, ’tis equally well:—

“So that, when equal reasons happen, pro and con in the same matter, the judgment may, on both sides, be more easily suspended:”

and they pretend to find out with much greater facility why a thing is false than why it is true; that which is not, than that which is; and what they do not believe, than what they do. Their way of speaking is, “I affirm nothing: it is no more so than so, or than either one nor t’other: I understand it not. Appearances are everywhere equal: the law of speaking, pro or con, is the same: nothing seems true that may not seem false.” Their sacramental word is lein that is to say, “I sustain, I do not budge.” This is the burden of their song, and others of like substance. The effect of it is a pure, entire, perfect, and absolute suspension of the judgment: they make use of their reason to inquire and debate, but not to fix and determine. Whoever shall imagine a perpetual confession of ignorance, a judgment without bias or inclination, upon any occasion whatever, conceives a true idea of Pyrrhonism. I express this fancy as well as I can, by reason that many find it hard to conceive; and the authors themselves represent it somewhat variously and obscurely.

As to what concerns the actions of life, they are in this of the common fashion; they yield and lend themselves to the natural inclinations, to the power and impulse of passions, to the constitutions of laws and customs, and to the tradition of arts:—

“For God chose not to have us know, but only use, those things.”

They suffer their ordinary actions to be guided by these things without any dispute or judgment; for which reason I cannot well reconcile with this argument what is said of Pyrrho; they represent him stupid and immovable, leading a kind of savage and unsociable life, getting in the way of the jostle

of carts, going upon the edge of precipices, and refusing to accommodate himself to the laws. This is to exaggerate his discipline; he would never make himself a stick or a stone, he would show himself a living man, discoursing, reasoning, enjoying all natural conveniences and pleasures, employing and making use of all his corporal and spiritual faculties in rule and reason; the fantastic, imaginary, and false privileges that man has usurped of lording it, of ordaining and establishing, be utterly renounced and quitted. There is no sect but is constrained to permit its sage to follow many things not comprehended, perceived, or consented to in its rules, if he means to live: and if he goes to sea he follows that design, not knowing whether it will be useful to him or no, and relies upon the tightness of the vessel, the experience of the pilot, the fitness of the season: probable circumstances only, according to which he is bound to go, and suffer himself to be governed by appearances, provided there be no express and manifest contrariety in them. He has a body, he has a soul; the senses push him, the mind spurs him on; and although he does not find in himself this proper and singular mark of judging, nor perceive that he ought not to engage his consent, considering that there may be some false, equal to these true appearances, yet does he not for all that fail of carrying on the offices of his life fully, freely, and conveniently. How many arts are there that profess to consist more in conjecture than in knowledge, that decide not upon true and false, and only follow that which seems true? There is, say they, true and false, and we have in us wherewith to seek it, but not to fix it when we touch it. We are much more prudent in letting ourselves be carried away by the swing of the world without inquisition; a soul clear from prejudice has a marvellous advance towards tranquillity and repose. Men who judge and control their judges never duly submit to them.

How much more docile and easy to be governed, both in the laws of religion and civil polity, are simple and incurious minds, than those over-vigilant and pedagoguish wits that will still be prating of divine and human causes? There is nothing in human invention that carries so great a show of likelihood and utility as this; this presents man, naked and empty, confessing his natural weakness, fit to receive some foreign force from above; unfurnished of human, and therefore more apt to receive divine knowledge; setting aside his own judgment to make more room for faith; not misbelieving, nor establishing any doctrine against the laws and common observances; humble, obedient, disciplinable, studious, a sworn

enemy of heresy, and consequently freeing himself from vain and irreligious opinions introduced by false sects; ’tis a carte blanche prepared to receive from the finger of God such forms as He shall please to write upon it. The more we resign and commit ourselves to God, and the more we renounce ourselves, of the greater value are we. “Take in good part,” says Ecclesiastes, “the things that present themselves to thee, as they seem and taste from hand to mouth: the rest is out of thy knowledge:”—

“The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are but vanity.”

Thus we see that, of the three general sects of philosophy, two make open profession of doubt and ignorance; and in that of the Dogmatists, which in the third, it is easy to discover that the greatest part of them only assume a face of assurance that they may have the better air; they have not so much thought to establish any certainty for us, as to show us how far they have proceeded in their search of truth:—

“Which the learned rather feign than know.”

Timaeus, having to instruct Socrates in what he knew of the gods, the world, and men, proposes to speak to him as a man to a man, and that it is sufficient if his reasons are as probable as those of another; for that exact reasons were neither in his nor in any other mortal hand. Which one of his followers has thus imitated:—

> *“I will, as well as I am able, explain; yet not as Pythius Apollo, that what I say should be fixed and certain, but like an ordinary man that follows probabilities by conjecture;”*

and this upon the natural and common subject of the contempt of death: he has elsewhere translated from the very words of Plato:—

> *“If perchance, discoursing of the nature of gods and the world’s original, we cannot do it quite as we desire, it will be no wonder. For it is just you should remember that both I who speak, and you who are to judge, are men; that if probable things are delivered, you may require no more.”*

Aristotle ordinarily heaps up a great number of other opinions and beliefs, to compare them with his own, and to let us see how much he has gone beyond them, and how much nearer he approaches to probability: for truth is not to be judged by the authority and testimony of others: which made Epicurus religiously avoid quoting them in his writings. This is the prince of all dogmatists, and yet we are told by him that much knowledge administers to many occasion of doubting the more; we see him sometimes

purposely so shroud and muffle up himself in thick and inextricable obscurity, that we know not what use to make of his advice; it is, in fact, a Pyrrhonism under a resolutive form. Hear Cicero's protestation, who expounds to us another's fancy by his own:—

> *"They who desire to know what we think of everything, are more inquisitive than is necessary. This practice in philosophy, of disputing against everything, and of absolutely concluding nothing, begun by Socrates, repeated by Arcesilaus, and confirmed by Carneades, has continued in use even to our own time. We are those who declare that there is a mixture of things false amongst all that are true, with such a resemblance to one another, that there is in them no certain mark to direct us, either to judge or assent."*

Why has not Aristotle only, but most of the philosophers, affected difficulty, if not to emphasize the vanity of the subject and amuse the curiosity of our mind, by giving it this bare, hollow bone to pick? Clitomachus affirmed that he could never discover, by Carneades' writings, what opinion he was of. This was what made Epicurus affect to be abstruse, and that procured Heraclitus to be surnamed Obscure. Difficulty is a coin the learned make use of, like jugglers, to conceal the inanity of their art, and which human sottishness easily takes for current pay:—

> *"He got a great name among the weak-witted, especially by reason of the obscurity of his language; for fools admire and love rather such things as are wrapped in dubious phrase."*

Cicero reprehends some of his friends for giving more of their time to the study of astrology, law, logic, and geometry, than they were worth, saying that they were by these diverted from the duties of life, more profitable and more worthy studies; the Cyrenaic philosophers equally despised natural philosophy and logic. Zeno, in the very beginning of the Books of the Commonwealth, declared all the liberal arts of no use. Chrysippus said that what Plato and Aristotle had written concerning logic, they had only done in sport and by way of exercise, and could not believe that they spoke in earnest of so vain a thing; Plutarch says the same of metaphysics; and Epicurus would have said as much of rhetoric, grammar, poesy, mathematics, and, natural philosophy excepted, of all the sciences, and Socrates of them all, excepting that of manners and of life; whatever any one required to be instructed in by him, he would ever, in the first place, demand an account of the conditions of his life present and past,

which he examined and judged, esteeming all other learning subordinate and supernumerary to that:—

> *"Parum mihi placeant eae literae quae ad virtutem doctoribus nihil profuerunt."*

Most of the arts have been, in like manner, decried by the same knowledge; but these men did not consider that it was from the purpose to exercise their wits in those very matters wherein there was no solid advantage.

As to the rest, some have looked upon Plato as a dogmatist, others as a doubter; others, in some things the one, and in other things the other. Socrates, the conductor of his dialogisms, is eternally upon questions and stirring up disputes, never determining, never satisfying; and professes to have no other science but that of opposing himself. Homer, their author, has equally laid the foundations of all the sects of philosophy, to show how indifferent it was which way we should choose. 'Tis said that ten several sects sprung from Plato; and, in my opinion, never did any instruction halt or waver, if his does not.

Socrates said that wise women, in taking upon them the trade of helping others to bring forth, left the trade of bringing forth themselves; and that he by the title of a sage man, which the gods had conferred upon him, was disabled, in his virile and mental love, of the faculty of bringing forth: contenting himself to help and assist those who could, to open their nature, anoint the passes, facilitate the birth, judge of the infant, baptize it, nourish it, fortify it, swathe it, circumcise it: exercising and employing his understanding in the perils and fortunes of others.

It is so with the most part of this third sort of authors, as the ancients have observed in the writings of Anaxagoras, Democritus, Parmenides, Xenophanes, and others: they have a way of writing doubtful in substance and design, rather inquiring than teaching, though they mix their style with some dogmatical periods. Is not the same thing seen in Seneca and Plutarch? how many contradictions are there to be found in these, if a man pry narrowly into them? The reconcilers of the jurisconsults ought first to reconcile them, each for himself. Plato seems to have affected this method of philosophizing in dialogues, to the end that he might with greater decency from several mouths deliver the diversity and variety of his own fancies. To treat variously of things is to treat of them as well as conformably, and better, that is to say, more copiously and with greater

profit. Let us take example from ourselves: judicial judgments are the highest point of dogmatical and determinative speaking: and yet those which our parliaments present to the people, the most exemplary, and most proper to nourish in them the reverence due to that dignity, principally through the sufficiency of the persons exercising it, derive their beauty, not so much from the conclusion, which with them is of daily occurrence and common to every judge, as from the dispute and heat of diverse and contrary arguments, that questions of law permit. And the largest field for reprehension that some philosophers have against others is drawn from the diversities and contradictions wherewith every one of them finds himself perplexed; either on purpose, to show the vacillation of human wit concerning everything; or ignorantly compelled by the volubility and incomprehensibility of all matter; which is the meaning of this phrase: in a slippery and sliding place let us suspend our belief: for, as Euripides says:—

"The works of God in various ways perplex us:"

like that which Empedocles, as if shaken by a divine fury and compelled by truth, often strewed here and there in his writings. "No, no; we feel nothing, we see nothing; all things are concealed from us; there is not one thing of which we can positively say it is;" according to the divine saying:—

"For the thoughts of mortal men are timid; and our devices are but uncertain."

It is not to be thought strange if men, despairing to overtake what they hunt after, have yet not lost the pleasure of the chase, study being of itself a pleasant employment, and so pleasant that amongst pleasures the Stoics forbid that also which proceeds from the exercise of the intellect, will have it curbed, and find a kind of intemperance in too much knowledge.

Democritus having eaten figs at his table that tasted of honey, fell presently to consider within himself whence they should derive this unusual sweetness, and to be satisfied in it, was about to rise from the table to see the place whence the figs had been gathered; which his chamber-maid observing, and having understood the cause, she smilingly told him that he need not trouble himself about that, for she had put them into a vessel in which there had been honey. He was vexed that she had thus deprived him of the occasion of this inquisition, and robbed his curiosity of matter to work upon. "Go thy way," said he, "thou hast done me wrong; but for all

that I will seek out the cause, as if it were natural;" and would willingly have found out some true reason for a false and imaginary effect. This story of a famous and great philosopher very clearly represents to us the studious passion, that puts us upon the pursuit of things of the acquisition of which we despair. Plutarch gives a like example of one who would not be satisfied in that whereof he was in doubt, that he might not lose the pleasure of inquiring into it; like the other, who would not that his physician should allay the thirst of his fever that he might not lose the pleasure of quenching it by drinking:—

" 'Tis better to learn more than is necessary than nothing at all."

As in all sorts of feeding, there is often only the mere pleasure of eating, and that what we take, which is acceptable to the palate, is not always nourishing or wholesome; so that which our understandings extract from learning does not cease to be pleasant, though there be nothing in it either nutritive or healthful. Thus say they: the consideration of nature is a diet proper for our minds; it raises and elevates us, makes us disdain low and terrestrial things, by comparing them with those that are celestial and high: even the inquisition of great and occult things is very pleasant, even to those who acquire no other benefit than the reverence and fear of judging it. This is what they profess. The vain image of this sickly curiosity is yet more manifest in this other example that they so often urge: Eudoxus wished and begged of the gods that he might once see the sun near at hand, to comprehend its form, greatness, and beauty, though on the condition that he should thereby be immediately burned. He would, at the price of his life, purchase a knowledge of which the use and possession should at the same time be taken from him; and for this sudden and vanished knowledge, lose all the other knowledges he had in the present, or might afterwards acquire.

I do not easily persuade myself that Epicurus, Plato, and Pythagoras have given us their Atoms, Ideas, and Numbers as current money: they were too wise to establish their articles of faith upon a thing so uncertain and so disputable. But, in that obscurity and ignorance of the world, each of these great personages endeavored to present some kind or other of image of light; and worked their brains for inventions that might, at all events, have a pleasant and subtle appearance, provided that, false as they were, they might make good their ground against those that would oppose them:—

"These things every one fancies according to his wit, and not by any power of knowledge."

One of the ancients, who was reproached that he professed philosophy, of which he nevertheless, in his own judgment, made no great account, answered that this was truly to philosophize. They would consider all, balance everything, and found this an employment well suited to our natural curiosity; some things they have written for the benefit of public society, as their religions, and, for that consideration, it was but reasonable that they should not examine public opinions too closely, that they might not disturb the common obedience to the laws and customs of their country.

Plato treats of this mystery with a raillery manifest enough; for where he writes as for himself, he gives no certain rule: when he plays the legislator, he borrows a magisterial and positive style, and boldly there foists in his most fantastic inventions as fit to persuade the vulgar as ridiculous to be believed by himself; knowing very well how fit we are to receive all sorts of impressions, especially the most immoderate and violent: and therefore in his laws he takes singular care that nothing be sung in public but poetry, of which the fabulous relations tend to some useful end; it being so easy to imprint all sorts of phantoms in the human mind, that it were injustice not to feed them rather with profitable untruths than with untruths that are unprofitable or hurtful. He says very plainly in his Republic, “that it is very often necessary for the profit of men to deceive them.” It is very easy to distinguish that some of the sects have more followed truth, and others utility, by which the last have gained their reputation. ’Tis the misery of our condition, that often that which presents itself to our imagination for the most true does not also appear the most useful to life; the boldest sects, as the Epicurean, Pyrrhonian, the new Academic, are yet, after all is said and done, constrained to submit to the civil law.

Other subjects there are that they have tumbled and tossed, some to the right and others to the left, every one endeavoring, right or wrong, to give them some kind of color; for having found nothing so abstruse that they would not venture to touch it, they are often forced to forge weak and ridiculous conjectures, not that they themselves look upon them as any foundation, nor as establishing any certain truth, but merely for exercise:—

> “*Not so much that they themselves believed what they said, as that they seem to have had a mind to exercise their wits in the difficulty of the matter.*”

And if we did not take it thus, how should we palliate so great inconstancy, variety, and vanity of opinions as we see have been produced by those excellent and admirable souls? as, for example, what can be more vain than to imagine to dominate God by our analogies and conjectures? to regulate Him and the world by our capacities and our laws? and to make use, at the expense of the Divinity, of that small portion of knowledge He has been pleased to impart to our natural condition? and, because we cannot extend our sight to His glorious throne, to have brought Him down to our corruption and our miseries?

Of all human and ancient opinions concerning religion, that seems to me the most likely and most excusable that recognized in God an incomprehensible power, the original and preserver of all things, all goodness, all perfection, receiving and taking in good part the honor and reverence that man paid unto Him, under what method, name, or ceremonies soever:—

> *"All-powerful Jove, father and mother of the world, of kings and gods."*

This zeal has universally been looked upon from heaven with a gracious eye. All governments have reaped fruit from their devotion: impious men and actions have everywhere had suitable result. Pagan histories recognize dignity, order, justice, prodigies, and oracles, employed for their profit and instruction in their fabulous religions: God, peradventure, through His mercy, vouchsafing by these temporal benefits to cherish the tender principles of a kind of brutish knowledge that natural reason gave them of Him amid the deceiving images of their dreams. Not only deceiving and false, but impious also, and injurious, are those that man has forged from his own invention; and of all the religions that St. Paul found in repute at Athens, that which they had dedicated to The Unknown God seemed to him the most to be excused.

Pythagoras shadowed the truth a little more closely, judging that the knowledge of this first Cause and Being of beings ought to be indefinite, without prescription, without declaration; that it was nothing else than the extreme effort of our imagination towards perfection, every one amplifying the idea according to his capacity. But if Numa attempted to conform the devotion of his people to this project, to attach them to a religion purely mental, without any prefixed object and material mixture, he undertook a thing of no use; the human mind could never support itself floating in such

an infinity of inform thoughts; it requires some certain image thereof to be presented according to its own model. The Divine Majesty has thus, in some sort, suffered Himself to be circumscribed in corporeal limits for our advantage: His supernatural and celestial sacraments have signs of our earthly condition: His adoration is by sensible offices and words, for ’tis man that believes and prays. I omit the other arguments upon this subject; but a man would have much ado to make me believe that the sight of our crucifixes, that the picture of our Saviour’s piteous passion, that the ornaments and ceremonious motions of our churches, that the voices accommodated to the devotion of our thoughts, and that emotion of the senses, do not warm the souls of the people with a religious passion of very advantageous effect.

Of those, to whom they have given a body, as necessity required in that universal blindness, I should, I fancy, most incline to those who adored the sun:—

- “The common light that shines indifferently
- On all alike, the world’s enlightening eyes,
- And if the Almighty ruler of the skies
- Has eyes, the sunbeams are His radiant eyes,
- That life to all impart, maintain, and guard,
- And all men’s actions upon earth regard.
- This great, this beautiful, and glorious sun,
- That seasons give by revolution:
- That with his influence fills the universe,
- And with one glance does sullen shades disperse.
- Life, soul of the world, that flaming in his sphere,
- Surrounds the heavens in one day’s career,
- Immensely great, moving, yet firm and round,
- Who the whole world below has fixed his bound,
- At rest without rest, idle without stay,
- Nature’s firs son, and father of the day:”

forasmuch as besides this grandeur and beauty of his, ’tis the piece of this machine that we discover at the remotest distance from us, and, by that means, so little known that they were pardonable for entering into so great admiration and reverence of it.

Thales, who first inquired into this matter, believed God to be a spirit, that made all things of water: Anaximander, that the gods were always dying and re-entering into life at divers seasons, and that there were an infinite number of worlds: Anaximenes, that the air was God, that he was produced and immense, ever moving. Anaxagoras was the first who held that the description and system of all things were conducted by the power and reason of an infinite spirit. Alcmaeon gave divinity to the sun, moon, and stars, and to the soul. Pythagoras made God a spirit diffused through the nature of all things, from which our souls are extracted: Parmenides, a circle surrounding the heaven and supporting the world by the heat of light. Empedocles pronounced the four elements, of which all things are composed, to be gods: Protagoras had nothing to say, whether they were or not, or what they were: Democritus was one while of opinion that the images of objects and their orbs were gods; another while, the nature that darts out those images, and again, our science and intelligence. Plato divides his belief into several opinions: he says in his Timaeus, that the father of the world cannot be named; in his Laws, that men are not to inquire into his being; and elsewhere, in the same books, he makes the world, the heavens, the stars, the earth, and our souls, gods; admitting, moreover, those which have been received by ancient institution in every republic. Xenophon reports a like perplexity in Socrates' doctrine; one while, that men are not to inquire into the form of God, and presently makes him maintain that the sun is God, and the soul, God; first, that there is but one God, and afterwards that there are many. Speusippus, the nephew of Plato, makes God a certain power governing all things, and that it is animal. Aristotle, one while says it is the mind, and another while the world; now he gives this world another master, and again makes God the heat of heaven. Xenocrates makes eight; five named amongst the planets, the sixth composed of all the fixed stars, as of so many members; the seventh and the eighth, the sun and the moon. Heraclides Ponticus does nothing but float in his opinions, and finally deprives God of sense and making him shift from one form to another: and at last says, that 'tis heaven and earth. Theophrastus wanders in the same irresolution amongst his various fancies, attributing the superintendence of the world one while to the understanding, another while to heaven, and then to the stars: Strato says 'tis nature having the power of generation, augmentation and diminution, without form and sentiment: Zeno says 'tis the law of nature commanding good and

prohibiting evil, which law is animal; and abolishes the accustomed gods, Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta: Diogenes Apolloniates says ’tis air. Xenophanes makes God round, seeing and hearing, not breathing, and having nothing in common with human nature. Aristo thinks the form of God to be incomprehensible, deprives Him of sense, and knows not whether He be animal or something else: Cleanthes one while supposes Him to be reason, another while the world, then the soul of nature, and then the supreme heat surrounding and enveloping all things. Perseus, Zeno’s disciple, was of opinion that men have given the title of gods to such as have added any notable advantage to human life, and even to profitable things themselves. Chrysippus made a confused heap of all the preceding lucubrations, and reckons, amongst a thousand forms of gods that he makes, the men also that have been deified. Diagoras and Theodorus flatly denied that there were any gods at all. Epicurus makes the gods shining, transparent, and perflable, lodged, as betwixt two forts, betwixt two worlds, secure from blows; clothed in a human figure and with such members as we have, which members are to them of no use:—

God and the Mortal. From painting by Jean Le Comte-DuNony.

“I have ever thought, and still think, there are gods above, but I do not conceive that they care what men do.”

Trust to your philosophy, my masters, and brag that you have found the bean in the cake, with all this rattle from so many philosophical heads! The perplexity of so many worldly forms has gained this for me, that manners and opinions contrary to mine do not so much displease as instruct me; nor so much make me proud, as they humble me in comparing them; and all other choice than what comes from the express and immediate hand

of God, seems to me a choice of very little prerogative. The polities of the world are no less opposed upon this subject than the schools: by which we may understand that fortune itself is not more variable and diverse, nor more blind and inconsiderate, than our reason. The things that are most unknown are the most proper to be deified; wherefore, to make gods of ourselves, as the ancients did, exceeds the extremest weakness of understanding. I should much rather have gone along with those who adored the serpent, the dog, or the ox; forasmuch as their nature and their being are less known to us, and that we are more at liberty to imagine what we please of those beasts, and to attribute to them extraordinary faculties; but to have made gods of our own condition, of which we should know the imperfection, and to have attributed to them desire, anger, revenge, marriages, generation, alliances, love and jealousy, our members and bones, our fevers and pleasures, our death and obsequies, this must needs proceed from a marvellous intoxication of human understanding:—

> *"Which things are so remote from the divine nature, that they are unworthy to be ranked among the gods."*
>
> *"Their forms, ages, clothes, ornaments are known: their descents, marriages, kindred, and all appropriated to the similitude of human weakness; for they are represented to us with anxious minds, and we read of the lusts, sickness, and anger of the gods;"*

as having attributed divinity not only to faith, virtue, honor, concord, liberty, victory, piety, but also to voluptuousness, fraud, death, envy, old age, misery; to fear, fever, ill fortune, and other injuries of our frail and transitory life:

> *"Into our temples to what end introduce our own corrupt manners? O souls, bending to the earth, devoid of all heavenly sentiments!"*

The Egyptians with a bold foresight interdicted, upon pain of hanging, that any one should say that their gods Serapis and Isis had formerly been men, and yet no one was ignorant that they had been such; and their effigies, represented with the finger upon the mouth, signified, says Varro, this mysterious decree to their priests, to conceal their mortal original, as it must, by necessary consequence, annul all the veneration paid to them. Seeing that man so much desired to equal himself to God, he had done better, says Cicero, to have attracted the divine conditions to himself, and have drawn them down hither below, than to send his corruption and misery

up on high: but, in truth, he has in several ways done both the one and the other, with like vanity of opinion.

When the philosophers search narrowly into the hierarchy of their gods, and make a great bustle about distinguishing their alliances, offices, and power, I cannot believe they speak with any seriousness. When Plato describes Pluto's verge to us, and the bodily pleasures or pains that await us after the ruin and annihiliation of our bodies, and accommodates them to the notions we have of them in this life:—

> *"Secret paths hide them, and myrtle groves environ them; their cares do not leave them when they die;"*

when Mohammed promises his followers a paradise hung with tapestry, adorned with gold and precious stones, furnished with wenches of excelling beauty, rare wines and delicate dishes, I easily discern that these are mockers who accommodate their promises to our stupidity, to attract and allure us by hopes and opinions suitable to our mortal appetite. And yet some amongst us are fallen into the like error, promising to themselves, after the resurrection, a terrestrial and temporal life, accompanied with all sorts of worldly conveniences and pleasures. Can we believe that Plato, he who had such heavenly conceptions, and was so conversant with Divinity as thence to derive the name of the Divine Plato, ever thought that the poor creature, man, had anything in him applicable to that incomprehensible power? and that he believed that the weak holds we are able to take were capable, or the force of our understanding robust enough to participate of eternal beatitude or pain? We should then tell him, on behalf of human reason: if the pleasures thou dost promise us in the other life are of the same kind that I have enjoyed here below, that has nothing in common with infinity: though all my five natural senses should be loaded with pleasure and my soul full of all the contentment it could hope or desire, we know what all this amounts to; all this would be nothing: if there be anything of mine there, there is nothing divine; if it be no more than what may belong to our present condition, it cannot be reckoned; all contentment of mortals is mortal; the recognition of our parents, children, and friends, if that can touch and delight us in the other world, if there it still continue a satisfaction to us, we still remain in earthly and finite conveniences: we cannot, as we ought, conceive the grandeur of those high and divine promises, if we can in any sort conceive them; to have a worthy imagination of them we must imagine them unimaginable, inexplicable, and

incomprehensible, and absolutely another thing than any in our miserable experience. “Eye hath not seen,” says St. Paul, “nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” And if to render us capable of them, our being be reformed and changed (as thou, Plato, sayest by thy purifications), it must be so extreme and total a change that, by physical doctrine, it will be no more us: —

> *“He was Hector whilst he was fighting; but when dragged by Achilles’ steeds, he was no longer Hector:”*

it must be something else that must receive these recompenses:—

> *“What is changed is dissolved, and therefore perishes; for the parts are separated, and depart from their order.”*

For, in Pythagoras’ metempsychosis, and the change of habitation that he imagined in souls, can we believe that the lion in whom the soul of Caesar is enclosed espouses Caesar’s passions, or that the lion is he? If it were still Caesar, they would be in the right who, controverting this opinion with Plato, reproach him that the son might be seen to ride his mother transformed into a mule, and the like absurdities. And can we believe that in the mutations that are made of the bodies of animals into others of the same kind, the newcomers are not other than their predecessors? From the ashes of a phoenix a work, they say, is engendered, and from that another phoenix; who can imagine that this second phoenix is not other than the first? We see our silkworms as it were die and wither; and from this withered body a butterfly is produced, and from that another worm; how ridiculous would it be to imagine that this were still the first? that which has once ceased to be is no more:—

> *“Nor, though time should collect after death our material atoms, and restore them to the form they had before, and give us again new light of life, would that new figure concern us at all; the sense of our being, once interrupted, is gone.”*

And, Plato, when thou sayest, in another place, that it shall be the spiritual part of man that will be concerned in the fruition of the recompenses of another life, thou tellest us a thing wherein there is as little appearance of truth:—

> *“No more than eyes once torn from their sockets can ever after see anything;”*

for, by this account, it would no more be man, nor consequently us, who should be concerned in this enjoyment: for we are composed of two principally essential parts, the separation of which is the death and ruin of our being:—

"For, when life is extinct, all motions of sense are dispersed and banished;"

we cannot say that the man suffers when the worms feed upon his members and that the earth consumes them:

"That is nothing to us whose being solely consists in the strict union of body and soul."

Moreover, upon what foundation of their justice can the gods take notice of or reward man after his death, for his good and virtuous actions, since it was they themselves who put them in the way and mind to do them? And why should they be offended at and punish him for evil actions, since they themselves have created him in so frail a condition, and that, with one glance of their will, they might prevent him from evil doing? Might not Epicurus, with great color of human reason, object this to Plato, did he not often save himself with this sentence: "That it is impossible to establish anything certain of the immortal nature by the mortal?" She does nothing but err throughout, but especially when she meddles with divine things. Who more evidently perceives this than we? For although we have given her certain and infallible principles, and though we have enlightened her steps, with the sacred lamp of the truth that it has pleased God to communicate to us, we daily see, nevertheless, that if she swerve never so little from the ordinary path, and that she stray from or wander out of the way set out and beaten by the Church, how immediately she loses, confounds, and fetters herself, tumbling and floating in this vast, turbulent, and waving sea of human opinions, without restraint and without any determinate end: so soon as she loses that great and common road she enters into a labyrinth of a thousand several paths.

Man cannot be anything but what he is, nor imagine beyond the reach of his capacity. " 'Tis a greater presumption," says Plutarch, "in them who are but men to attempt to speak and discourse of the gods and demigods, than it is in a man, utterly ignorant of music, to judge of singing; or in a man who never saw a camp to dispute about arms and martial affairs, presuming, by some light conjecture, to understand the effect of an art to which he is totally a stranger." Antiquity, I fancy, thought to put a

compliment upon and to add something to the divine grandeur in assimilating it to man, investing it with his faculties and adorning it with his fine humors and most shameful necessities: offering to it our aliments to eat, our dances, mummeries, and farces to divert it, our vestments to cover it, and our houses to inhabit; caressing it with the odors of incense and the sounds of music, with festoons and nosegays; and, to accommodate it to our vicious passions, flattering its justice with inhuman vengeance, delighting it with the ruin and dissipating of things by it created and preserved: as Tiberius Sempronius, who burned the rich spoils and arms he had gained from the enemy in Sardinia as a sacrifice to Vulcan, and Paulus Aemilius those of Macedonia to Mars and Minerva. And Alexander, arriving at the Indian Ocean, threw several great vessels of gold into the sea in favor of Thetis, and, moreover, loaded her altars with a slaughter, not of innocent beasts only, but of men also; as several nations, and ours amongst the rest, ordinarily used to do; and I believe there is no nation that has not done the same:—

"Four sons of Sulmo, and as many more whom Ufens bred, he seized alive, to offer them a sacrifice to the infernal gods."

The Getae hold themselves to be immortal, and that death is nothing but a journey to Zamolxis their god. Once in every five years they despatch some one amongst them to him, to entreat of him such necessaries as they require. This envoy is chosen by lot, and the form of his despatch, after having been instructed by word of mouth what he is to say, is, that of those present three hold out so many javelins, against which the rest throw his body with all their force. If he happen to be wounded in a mortal part and that he immediately die, 'tis reputed a certain sign of divine favor; if he escape, he is looked upon as a wicked and execrable wretch, and another is deputed after the same manner in his stead. Amestris, the wife of Xerxes, having grown old, caused at once fourteen young men of the best families of Persia to be buried alive, according to the religion of the country, to gratify some infernal deity. And to this day the idols of Themixtitan are cemented with the blood of little children, and they delight in no sacrifice but of these pure and infantine souls: a justice thirsty of innocent blood!—

"Religion could persuade men to so many mischiefs."

The Carthaginians immolated their own children to Saturn; and such as had none of their own bought of others, the father and mother being further obliged to attend the ceremony with a gay and contented countenance.

It was a strange fancy to seek to gratify the divine goodness with our affliction. Like the Lacedaemonians, who courted their Diana with the tormenting of young boys, whom they caused to be whipped for her sake, very often to death: it was a savage humor to think to gratify the Architect by the subversion of His building, and to think to take away the punishment due to the guilty by punishing the innocent; and that poor Iphigenia, at the port of Aulis, should by her death and sacrifice acquit towards God the whole army of the Greeks from all the crimes they had committed:—

"But that the chaste girl, on the very eve of her nuptials, should die, a sad victim, immolated by her father;"

and that those two noble and generous souls of the two Decii, father and son, to incline the favor of the gods to be propitious to the affairs of Rome, should throw themselves headlong into the thickest of the enemy:—

"How great an injustice in the gods was it that they could not be reconciled to the people of Rome unless such men perished!"

To which may be added, that it is not for the criminal to cause himself to be scourged according to his own measure nor at his own time; but that it wholly belongs to the judge, who considers nothing as chastisement but the pain he appoints, and cannot deem that punishment which proceeds from the consent of him who suffers: the divine vengeance presupposes an absolute dissent in us, both for its justice and our own penalty. And therefore it was a ridiculous humor of Polycrates the tyrant of Samos, who, to interrupt the continued course of his good fortune and to balance it, went and threw the dearest and most precious jewel he had into the sea, fancying that by this voluntary mishap he bribed and satisfied the revolution and vicissitude of fortune; and she, to mock his folly, ordered it so that the same jewel came again into his hands, found in the belly of a fish. And then to what end are those tearings and mutilations of the Corybantes, the Menades, and in our times of the Mohammedans, who slash their faces, bosoms, and members to gratify their prophet: seeing that the offence lies in the will, not in the breasts, eyes, genitories, in plumpness, in the shoulders, or the throat? —

"So great is the fury of the mind perturbed, and dislodged from its seat, that the gods may be appeased, whereas even men do not show anger."

The use of this natural contexture has not only respect to us, but also the service of God and of other men; and 'tis as unjust wilfully to wound or

hurt it, as to kill ourselves upon any pretence whatever; it seems to be great cowardice and treason to exercise cruelty upon and to destroy the functions of the body, stupid and servile, in order to spare the soul the trouble of governing them according to reason:—

> *"Where they fear the angry gods, who are thus propitiated? Some, indeed, have been made eunuchs for the lust of princes: but no man at his master's command has put his own hand to unman himself."*

So did they fill their religion with many ill effects:—

> *"Formerly religion often inspired wicked and impious deeds."*

Now nothing about us can, in any sort, be compared or likened unto the divine nature that will not blemish and tarnish it with so much imperfection. How can that infinite beauty, power, and goodness admit of any correspondence or similitude to so abject a thing as we are, without extreme wrong and dishonor to His divine greatness?

> *"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."*

Stilpo the philosopher being asked whether the gods were delighted with our adorations and sacrifices: "You are indiscreet," answered he; "let us withdraw apart if you talk of such things." Nevertheless, we prescribe Him bounds, we keep His power besieged by our reasons (I call reason our reveries and dreams with the dispensation of philosophy, which says, that the wicked man, and even the fool, go mad by reason, but 'tis by a particular form of reason); we will subject Him to the vain and feeble appearances of our understanding; Him who has made both us and our understanding. Because nothing is made of nothing, God, therefore, could not have made the world without matter. What! has God put into our hands the keys and most secret springs of His power; is He obliged not to exceed the limits of our knowledge? Put the case, O man, that thou hast been able here to mark some footsteps of His effects: dost thou, therefore, think that He has therein employed all He can, and has crowded all His forms and all His ideas in this work? Thou seest nothing but the order and regulation of this little vault wherein thou art lodged—if thou dost see so much—whereas His divinity has an infinite jurisdiction beyond; this part is nothing in comparison of the whole:—

> *"Since all things in heaven, earth, and sea are as nothing to the totality of the great All:"*

’tis a municipal law that thou allegest; thou knowest not what is the universal. Tie thyself to that to which thou art subject, but not Him; He is not of thy brotherhood, thy fellow-citizen, or companion. If He has in some sort communicated Himself unto thee, ’tis not to debase Himself to thy littleness, nor to make thee controller of His power; the human body cannot fly to the clouds. ’Tis for thee the sun runs without resting every day his ordinary course: the bounds of the seas and the earth cannot be confounded; the water is unstable and without firmness; a wall, unless it be broken, is impenetrable to a solid body; a man cannot preserve his life in the flames; he cannot be both in heaven and upon earth, and corporally in a thousand places at once. ’Tis for thee that He has made these rules; ’tis thee that they concern; He manifested to the Christians that He enfranchised them all, when it pleased Him. And, in truth, why, almighty as He is, should He have limited His power within any certain bounds? In favor of whom should He have renounced His privilege? Thy reason has in no other thing more of likelihood and foundation, than in that wherein it persuades thee that there is a plurality of worlds:—

“And the earth, and sun, moon, sea, and the rest that are, are not single, but rather innumerable;”

the most eminent minds of elder times believed it, and some of this age of ours, compelled by the appearances of human reason, do the same! forasmuch as in this fabric that we behold there is nothing single and one:—

“Since there is nothing single in this mighty mass, that can alone beget, or alone increase;”

and that all the kinds are multiplied in some number or other; by which it seems not to be likely that God should have made this work only without a companion, and that the matter of this form should have been totally exhausted in this sole individual:—

“Wherefore it is again and again necessary to confess that there must elsewhere be other aggregations of matter, just as that which the air holds in strict grasp,”

especially if it be a living creature, which its motions render so credible that Plato affirms it, and that many of our people either confirm it or do not venture to deny it: no more than that ancient opinion, that the heaven, the stars, and other members of the world, are creatures composed of body and soul, mortal in respect of their composition, but immortal by the determination of the Creator. Now, if there be many worlds, as

Democritus, Epicurus, and almost all philosophy has believed, how do we know that the principles and rules of this of ours in like manner concern the rest? They may, peradventure, have another form and another polity. Epicurus supposes them either like or unlike. We see in this world an infinite difference and variety, merely by distance of places; neither corn nor wine, nor any of our animals, are to be seen in that new corner of the world discovered by our fathers; ’tis all there another thing; and, in times past, do but consider in how many parts of the world they had no knowledge either of Bacchus or Ceres. If Pliny and Herodotus are to be believed, there are, in certain places, kinds of men very little resembling us; and there are mongrel and ambiguous forms betwixt the human and brutal natures: there are countries where men are born without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breast; where they are all hermaphrodites; where they go on all fours; where they have but one eye in the forehead, and a head more like that of a dog than like one of ours. Where they are half fish the lower part, and live in the water; where the women bear at five years old, and live but eight; where the head and skin of the forehead are so hard, that a sword will not enter it, but rebounds; where men have no beards; nations that know not the use of fire; and others that eject their seed of a black color. What shall we say of those that naturally change themselves into wolves, colts, and then into men again? And if it be true, as Plutarch says, that in some place of the Indies, there are men without mouths, who nourish themselves with the smell of certain odors, how many of our descriptions are false? Man, at this rate, becomes more than ludicrous, and, peradventure, quite incapable of reason and society; the disposition and cause of our internal structure would, for the most part, be to no purpose.

Moreover, how many things are there in our own knowledge that oppose those fine rules we have cut out for and prescribed to Nature? And yet we must undertake to circumscribe God Himself! How many things do we call miraculous and contrary to Nature! this is done by every nation and by every man, according to the measure of their ignorance: how many occult properties and quintessences do we discover? For, with us, to go “according to Nature,” is no more but to go “according to our intelligence,” as far as that is able to follow, and as far as we are able to see into it: all beyond that must be monstrous and irregular. Now, by this account, all things shall be monstrous to the wisest and most understanding men; for human reason has persuaded them that it has no manner of ground or

foundation, not so much as to be assured that snow is white; and Anaxagoras affirmed it to be black; if there be anything, or if there be nothing: if there be knowledge or ignorance, which Metrodorus of Chios denied that man was able to determine; or whether we live, as Euripides doubts, “whether the life we live is life, or whether that we call death be not life:”—

“Who knows if living, which is called dying because living is dying,”

and not without some appearance: for why do we, from this instant which is but a flash in the infinite course of an eternal night, and so short an interruption of our perpetual and natural condition, death possessing all that passed before and all the future of this moment, and also a good part of the moment itself, derive the title of Being? Others swear there is no motion at all, as the followers of Melissus, and that nothing stirs; for if there be nothing but One, neither can that spherical motion be of any use to him, nor the motion from one place to another, as Plato proves; others say there’s neither generation nor corruption in Nature. Protagoras says that there is nothing in Nature but doubt, that a man may equally dispute of all things. Nausiphanes, that of things which seem to be, nothing is more than it is not: that there is nothing certain but uncertainty: Parmenides, that of that which it seems there is no one thing in general; that there is but One; Zeno, that there’s no One, and that there is nothing: if there were One, it would either be in another or in itself; if it be in another, they are two; if it be in itself, they are yet two; the comprehending and the comprehended. According to these doctrines, the nature of things is no other than a shadow, either vain or absolutely false.

This way of speaking in a Christian man has ever seemed to me very indiscreet and irreverent: “God cannot die; God cannot contradict himself; God cannot do this, or that.” I do not like to have the divine power so limited by the laws of men’s mouths; and the idea which presents itself to us in those propositions, ought to be more religiously and reverently expressed.

Our speaking has its failings and defects, as well as all the rest: grammar is that which creates most disturbances in the world: our suits only spring from disputation as to the interpretation of laws: and most wars proceed from the inability of ministers clearly to express the conventions and treaties of amity among princes. How many quarrels, and those of how

great importance, has the doubt of the meaning of this syllable Hoc created in the world? Let us take the conclusion that logic itself presents us as manifestly clear: if you say it is fine weather, and that you say true, it is, then, fine weather. Is not this a very certain form of speaking? and yet it will deceive us; that it will do so, let us follow the example: if you say, I lie, and that you say true, then you do lie. The art, reason, and force of the conclusion of this are the same with the other; and yet we are gravelled. The Pyrrhonian philosophers, I see, cannot express their general conception in any kind of speaking; for they would require a new language on purpose; ours is all formed of affirmative propositions, which are totally hostile to them; insomuch that when they say, “I doubt,” they are presently taken by the throat, to make them confess that at least they know and are assured of this, that they do doubt. And so they have been compelled to shelter themselves under this medicinal comparison, without which their humor would be inexplicable: when they pronounce, “I know not:” or, “I doubt;” they say that this proposition carries off itself with the rest, no more nor less than rhubarb that drives out the ill humors and carries itself off with them. This fancy is more certainly understood by interrogation: What do I know? as I bear it in the emblem of a balance.

See what use we make of this irreverent way of speaking: in the present disputes about our religion, if you press the adversaries too hard, they will roundly tell you, “that it is not in the power of God to make it so that His body should be in paradise and upon earth, and in several places at once.” And see what advantage the old scoffer makes of this! “At least,” says he, “it is no little consolation to man to see that God cannot do all things; for he cannot kill himself though he would, which is the greatest privilege we have in our condition: he cannot make mortals immortal, nor revive the dead, nor make it so that he who has lived has not, nor that he who has had honors, has not had them, having no other power over the past than that of oblivion. And that the comparison of a man to God may yet be made out by pleasant examples, he cannot order it so that twice ten shall not be twenty.” This is what he says, and what a Christian ought to take heed shall not escape his lips; whereas, on the contrary, it seems as if all men studied this impudent kind of blasphemous language, to reduce God to their own measure:—

> *“Let it shine or rain to-morrow, this cannot alter the past, nor uncreate and render void that which the fleeting hour has once*

brought."

When we say, that the infinity of ages, as well past as to come, are but one instant with God; that His goodness, wisdom, and power are the same with His essence, our mouths speak it, but our understandings apprehend it not. And yet such is our outrageous opinion of ourselves, that we must make the divinity pass through our sieve; and from this proceed all the dreams and errors with which the world abounds, when we reduce and weigh in our balance a thing so far above our poise:—

" 'Tis wonderful to what the wickedness of man's heart will proceed, invited by some success."

How magisterially and insolently do the Stoics reprove Epicurus for maintaining that the truly good and happy Being appertained only to God, and that the Sage had nothing but a shadow and resemblance of it? How daringly have they bound God to destiny (a thing that, by my consent, none that bears the name of a Christian shall ever do again); while Thales, Plato, and Pythagoras have enslaved him to necessity. This arrogance of attempting to discover God with our weak eyes, has been the cause that an eminent person of our nation has attributed to the divinity a corporal form; and is the reason of what happens amongst us every day of attributing to God important events, by a special appointment: because they sway with us, they conclude that they also sway with Him, and that He has a more intent and vigilant regard to them than to others of less moment, or of ordinary course:—

"*The gods concern themselves with great matters, disregard the small:"*

observe His example; He will clear this to you by His reason:—

"*Neither do kings in their dominions take notice of all minor matters;"*

as if to that King of kings it were more and less to subvert a kingdom or to move the leaf of a tree: or as if His providence acted after another manner in inclining the event of a battle than in the leap of a flea. The hand of His government is laid upon everything after the same manner, with the same power and order: our interest does nothing towards it; our inclinations and measures sway nothing with Him:—

"*God is thus a great artificer in great things, that He may not be less so in small ones."*

Our arrogance sets this blasphemous comparison ever before us. Because our employments are a burden to us, Strato has courteously been pleased to exempt the gods from all offices, as their priests are; he makes nature produce and support all things; and with her weights and motions make up the several parts of the world, discharging human nature from the awe of divine judgments:—

> *"What is blessed and eternal, has neither any business itself nor gives any to another."*

Nature wills that in like things there should be a like relation: the infinite number of mortals, therefore, concludes a like number of immortals; the infinite things that kill and destroy presuppose as many that preserve and profit. As the souls of the gods without tongue, eyes, or ear, each of them feels amongst themselves what the others feel, and judge our thoughts; so the souls of men, when at liberty and loosed from the body, either by sleep, or some ecstasy, divine, foretell, and see things, which, whilst joined to the body, they could not see. "Men," says St. Paul, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." Do but take notice of the jugglery in the ancient deification: after the grand and stately pomp of the funeral, so soon as the fire began to mount to the top of the pyramid and to catch hold of the hearse where the body lay, they, at the same time, turned out an eagle, which, flying upward, signified that the soul went into Paradise; we have still a thousand medals, and particularly of that honest woman Faustina, where this eagle is represented carrying these deified souls with their heels upwards, towards heaven. 'Tis a pity that we should fool ourselves with our own fopperies and inventions:—

> *"They fear what they themselves have invented:"*

like children who are frightened with the face of their companion that they themselves have smutted:—

> *"As if anything could be more unhappy than man, who is domineered over by his own fancies."*

'Tis far from honoring Him who made us, to honor him whom we have made. Augustus had more temples than Jupiter, served with as much religion and belief of miracles. The Thasians, in return for the benefits they had received from Agesilaus, coming to bring him word that they had canonized him: "Has your nation," said he to them, "the power to make

gods of whom they please? Pray first deify some one amongst yourselves, and when I see what advantage he has by it, I will thank you for your offer." Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet he will be making gods by dozens. Hear what Trismegestus says in praise of our sufficiency: "Of all the wonderful things, it surmounts all wonder that man could find out the divine nature and make it." And take here the arguments of the school of philosophy itself:—

> *"To whom alone it is given to know the gods and deities of heaven, or know that we can know them not."*

"If there be a God, He is a corporeal creature; if He be a corporeal creature, He has sense; and if He has sense, He is subject to corruption. If He be without a body, He is without a soul, and consequently without action: and if He have a body it is perishable." Is not here a triumph? We are incapable of having made the world; there must, then, be some more excellent nature that has put a hand to the work. It were a foolish and ridiculous arrogance to esteem ourselves the most perfect thing of this universe: there must, then, be something that is better and more perfect, and that is God. When you see a stately and stupendous edifice, though you do not know who is the owner of it, you would yet conclude it was not built for rats: and this divine structure that we behold of the celestial palace, have we not reason to believe that it is the residence of some possessor, who is much greater than we? Is not the highest always the most worthy; and we are placed lowest to Him. Nothing without a soul and without reason can produce a living creature capable of reason; the world produces us; the world, then, has soul and reason. Every part of us is less than we: we are part of the world; the world, therefore, is endued with wisdom and reason, and that more abundantly than we. 'Tis a fine thing to have a great government: the government of the world, then, appertains to some happy nature. The stars do us no harm: they are, then, full of goodness. We have need of nourishment; then so have the gods also; and they feed upon the vapors of the earth. Worldly goods are not goods to God; therefore they are not goods to us. Offending, and being offended, are equally testimonies of imbecility: 'tis, therefore, folly to fear God. God is good by His nature; man by his industry, which is more. The divine and human wisdom have no other distinction, but that the first is eternal: but duration is no accession to wisdom; therefore, we are companions. We have life, reason, and liberty; we esteem goodness, charity, and justice: these qualities, then, are in Him."

In fine, the building and destroying the conditions of the divinity are forged by man, according as they bear relation to himself. What a pattern! what a model! Let us stretch, let us raise and swell human qualities as much as we please: puff up thyself, poor creature, yet more and more, and more:—

"Not if thou burst, said he."

"Certainly they do not imagine God, whom they cannot imagine; but they imagine themselves in His stead: they do not compare Him, but themselves, not to Him, but to themselves."

In natural things the effects but half relate to their causes: what about this? it is above the order of nature; its condition is too elevated, too remote, and too mighty to permit itself to be bound and fettered by our conclusions. 'Tis not through ourselves that we arrive at that place: our ways lie too low: we are no nearer heaven on the top of Mount Cenis than at the bottom of the sea: take the distance with your astrolabe. They debase God even to the carnal knowledge of women, to so many times, to so many propagations: Paulina the wife of Saturninus, a matron of great reputation at Rome, thinking she lay with the god Serapis, found herself in the arms of a lover of hers, through the pandarism of the priests of the temple. Varro, the most subtle and most learned of all the Latin authors, in his book of theology, writes that the sacristan of Hercules' temple, throwing dice with one hand for himself and with the other for Hercules, played after that manner with him for a supper and a wench: if he won, at the expense of the offerings: if he lost, at his own. He lost, and paid the supper and the wench. Her name was Laurentina: she saw by night this god in her arms, who, moreover, told her that the first she met the next day, should give her a heavenly reward; which proved to be Taruncius, a rich young man, who took her home to his house, and in time left her his heiress. She, in her turn, thinking to do a thing that would be pleasing to his god, left the people of Rome her heirs, and therefore had divine honors voted to her. As if it were not sufficient that Plato was originally descended from the gods by a double line, and that he had Neptune for the common father of his race, it was certainly believed at Athens that Aristo, having a mind to enjoy the fair Perictione, could not, and was warned by the god Apollo in a dream to leave her unpolluted and untouched till she should first be brought to bed. These were the father and mother of Plato. How many ridiculous stories are there of like cuckoldings committed by the gods against poor mortals? and how many husbands injuriously disgraced in favor of their children? In the Mohammedan

religion, there are plenty of Merlins, found by the belief of the people, that is to say, children without fathers, spiritual, divinely conceived in the wombs of virgins, and who bear a name that signifies as much in their language.

We are to observe that to every creature nothing is more dear and estimable than its own being; the lion, the eagle, dolphin prizing nothing beyond their own kind, and that everything refers the qualities of all other things to its own proper qualities, which we may indeed extend or contract, but that's all; for beyond that relation and principle, our imagination cannot go, can guess at nothing else, nor possibly go out thence or stretch beyond it. From which spring these ancient conclusions: "Of all forms, the most beautiful is that of man; therefore God must be of that form. No one can be happy without virtue, nor virtue be without reason, and reason cannot inhabit anywhere but in a human shape: God is therefore clothed in a human shape:"—

> *"It is so imprinted in our minds, and the fancy is so prepossessed with it, that when a man thinks of God, a human figure ever presents itself to the imagination."*

Therefore it was that Xenophanes pleasantly said, that if beasts frame any gods to themselves, as 'tis likely they do, they make them certainly such as themselves are, and glorify themselves therein as we do. For why may not a goose say thus: "All parts of the universe have I an interest in; the earth serves me to walk upon, the sun to light me, the stars to spread their influence upon me; I have such an advantage by the winds, such conveniences by the waters: there is nothing that yon heavenly roof looks upon so favorably as me; I am the darling of nature. Is it not man that feeds, lodges, and serves me? 'Tis for me that he sows and grinds; if he eats me, he does the same by his fellow-man, and so do I the worms that kill and devour him." As much might be said by a crane, and more magnificently, upon the account of the liberty of his flight, and the possession of that high and beautiful region:—

> *"So flattering and wheedling is nature to herself."*

By the same consequence, the destinies are, then, for us, for us the world; it shines, it thunders for us; creator and creatures all are for us: 'tis the mark and point to which the universality of things is directed. Look into the records that philosophy has kept, for two thousand years and more, of the affairs of heaven; the gods all that while have neither acted nor spoken

but for man: she does not allow them any other consultation or vocation. See them, here, against us in war:—

"*The sons of earth, subdued by the hand of Hercules, in the rude shock made old Saturn's refulgent palace shake.*"

And here see them participate of our troubles, to make a return for having so often shared in theirs:—

"*Neptune with his massive trident made the walls and foundations shake, and overturned the whole city; here most cruel Juno first holds the Scaean gates.*"

The Caunians, jealous of the authority of their own especial gods, arm themselves on the days of their devotion, and run all about their precincts cutting and slashing the air with their swords, by that means to drive away and banish all foreign gods out of their territory. Their powers are limited according to our necessity; this divinity cures horses, that men, this the plague, that the scurf, that the cough; one, one sort of itch, another another:—

"*At such a rate does false religion create gods for the most contemptible uses.*"

This makes the grapes grow, this the waters; that has presidence over lechery; this the superintendence over merchandise; for every sort of artisan a god: this has his province and credit in the east, that in the west:—

"*Here were her arms, here her chariot.*"

"*O sacred Phoebus, who hast sway over the navel of the earth.*"

"*The Athenians worship Pallas; Minoian Crete, Diana; Vulcan is worshipped on the Lemnian shore; Sparta and Mycene adore Juno; the Arcadians worship Faunus; Mars in Latium was adored:*"

this deity has only one town or one family in his possession; that lives alone; this in company either voluntary or upon necessity:—

"*Temples to the grandson are joined to that of the great-grandfather;*"

there are some so common and mean (for the number amounts to six-and-thirty thousand) that they must pack five or six together to produce one ear of corn, and thence take their several names; three to a door, that of the plank, that of the hinge, and that of the threshold; four to a child, protectors of his swathing clouts, his drink, meat, sucking; some certain, some uncertain and doubtful; some that are not yet entered paradise:—

“Whom, since we think them not yet worthy of heaven, we permit to inhabit the earth we have given.”

There are amongst them physicians, poets, lawyers: some, a mean betwixt the divine and human nature, mediators betwixt God and us; adored with a certain second and diminutive sort of adoration; infinite in titles and offices; some good, others evil; some old and decrepit, some that are mortal: for Chrysippus was of opinion that in the last conflagration of the world all the gods will have to die except Jupiter. Man forges a thousand pretty societies betwixt God and him: is He not his countryman?—

“Crete, the cradle of Jove.”

This is the excuse that, upon consideration of this subject, Scaevola, a high priest, and Varro, a great divine, in their time make us: “That it is necessary the people should be ignorant of many things that are true, and believe many things that are false:—

“Seeing he inquires into the truth, so that he may be made free, ’tis thought fit he would be deceived.”

Human eyes cannot perceive things but by the forms they know: and do we not remember what a leap miserable Phaeton took for attempting to govern the reins of his father’s horses with a mortal hand? Our mind falls into as great a profundity, and is after the same manner bruised and shattered by its own temerity. If you ask philosophy of what matter is heaven, of what the sun, what answer will she return, but that it is of iron, with Anaxagoras of stone, or some other matter that she makes use of? If a man inquire of Zeno what Nature is? “A mechanical fire,” says he, “proper for generation, proceeding regularly.” Archimedes, master of that science which attributes to itself the precedence before all others for truth and certainty: “the sun,” says he, “is a god of red-hot iron.” Was not this a fine imagination, extracted from the beauty and inevitable necessity of geometrical demonstrations? yet not so inevitable and useful, but that Socrates thought it was enough to know so much of geometry only as to measure the land a man bought or sold; and that Polyaenus, who had been a great and famous master in it, despised it as full of falsity and manifest vanity, after he had once tasted the delicate fruits of the effeminate garden of Epicurus. Socrates in Xenophon concerning this proposition of Anaxagoras, reputed by antiquity learned above all others in celestial and divine matters, says that he had disordered his brain, as all men do who too immoderately search into knowledges which nothing appertain unto them:

when he made the sun to be a burning stone, he did not consider that a stone does not shine in the fire; and which is worse, that it will there consume; and in making the sun and fire one, that fire does not turn complexions black in shining upon them; that we are able to look fixedly upon fire: and that fire kills herbs and plants. 'Tis Socrates' opinion, and mine too, that it is best judged of heaven not to judge of it at all. Plato having occasion in his Timaeus to speak of daemons: "This undertaking," says he, "exceeds our ability; we are to believe those ancients who said they were begotten by them: 'tis against reason to refuse faith to the children of the gods, though what they say should not be proved by any necessary or probable reasons, seeing they engaged to speak of domestic and quite familiar things."

Let us see if we have a little more light in the knowledge of human and natural things. Is it not a ridiculous attempt for us to devise for those, to whom by our own confession our knowledge is not able to attain, another body, and to lend a false form of our own invention: as is manifest in the motion of the planets, to which, seeing our wits cannot possibly arrive nor conceive their natural conduct, we lend them material, heavy, and substantial springs of our own, by which to move:—

"A golden beam, wheels of gold, silver spokes"—

you would say that we had had coach-makers, wheelwrights, and painters that went up on high to make engines of various movements, and to range the wheels and interlacings of the heavenly bodies of differing colors about the axis of Necessity, according to Plato:—

> "*The world is the great home of all things, which five thundering zones enfold, through which a girdle, painted with twelve glittering constellations, shines high in the oblique roof, marks the diurnal course, and receives the biga of the moon:*"

these are all dreams and fantastic follies. Why will not Nature please, once for all, to lay open her bosom to us, and plainly discover to us the means and conduct of her movements, and prepare our eyes to see them? Good God! what blunders, what mistakes should we discover in our poor science! I am mistaken if it apprehend any one thing as it really is: and I shall depart hence more ignorant of all other things than of my own ignorance.

Have I not read in Plato this divine saying, that "Nature is nothing but an enigmatic poesy?" as if a man might, peradventure, say, a veiled and

shaded picture, breaking out here and there with an infinite variety of false lights to puzzle our conjectures:—

> *"All those things lie concealed and involved in so caliginous an obscurity, that no point of human wit can be so sharp as to pierce heaven or penetrate the earth."*

And certainly philosophy is no other than a sophisticated poesy. Whence do the ancient writers extract their authorities but from the poets? and the first of them were poets themselves, and wrote accordingly. Plato himself is but a disconnected poet: Timon injuriously calls him the great forger of miracles. All superhuman sciences make use of the poetic style. Just as women for themselves make use of teeth of ivory where the natural are wanting, and instead of their true complexion make one of some foreign matter; legs of cloth or felt, and plumpness of cotton, and in the sight and knowledge of every one paint, patch, and trick up themselves with false or borrowed beauty: so does science (and even our law itself has, they say, legal fictions whereon it builds the truth of its justice); she gives us, in presupposition and for current pay, things which she herself informs us were invented: for these epicycles, excentric and concentric, which astrology makes use of to carry on the motions of the stars, she gives us as the best she could contrive upon that subject; as also, in all the rest, philosophy presents us, not that which really is or what she really believes, but what she has contrived with the most plausible likelihood and the fairest aspect. Plato upon the subject of the state of human bodies and those of beasts: "I should know that what I have said is truth," says he, "had I the confirmation of an oracle: but this I will affirm, that what I have said is the most likely to be true of anything I could say."

'Tis not to heaven only that she sends her ropes, engines, and wheels; let us consider a little what she says of ourselves and of our contexture: there is not more retrogradation, trepidation, accession, recession, aberration, in the stars and celestial bodies than they have found out in this poor little human body. Truly they have good reason upon that very account to call it the Little World, so many tools and parts have they employed to erect and build it. To accommodate the motions they see in man, the various functions and faculties that we find in ourselves, into how many parts have they divided the soul? in how many places lodged, into how many orders have they divided, to how many stories have they raised this poor creature man, besides those that are natural and to be perceived? and how many

offices and vocations have they assigned him? They make of him an imaginary public thing; ’tis a subject that they hold and handle; and they have full power granted to them to rip, place, displace, piece, and stuff it, every one according to his own fancy, and yet to this day they possess it not. They cannot, not in reality only but even in dreams, so govern it that there will not be some cadence or sound that will escape their architecture, enormous as it is, and botched with a thousand false and fantastic patches. And it is not reason to excuse them; for though we are content with painters when they paint heaven, earth, seas, mountains, remote islands, if they gave us but some slight mark of them, and, as of things unknown, are satisfied with a feigned and obscure shadowing forth; yet when they come to draw us by the life, or any other subject which is known and familiar to us, we then require of them a perfect and exact representation of lineaments and colors, and despise them if they fail in it.

I am very well pleased with the Milesian girl who, observing the philosopher Thales to be always contemplating the celestial arch and with eyes ever gazing upward, laid something in his way that he might stumble at, to put him in mind that it would be time to take up his thoughts about things in the clouds when he had provided for those under his feet. Certes, she advised him very well, rather to look to himself than to gaze at heaven; for, as Democritus says, by the mouth of Cicero:—

> *“No man regards what is under his feet; they are always prying towards heaven.”*

But our condition will have it so, that the knowledge of what we have in hand is as remote from us, and as much above the clouds as that of the stars: as Socrates says in Plato, that whoever tampers with philosophy may be reproached, as Thales was by the woman, that he sees nothing of that which is before him; for every philosopher is ignorant of what his neighbor does; yes, and of what he does himself, and is ignorant of what they both are, whether beasts or men.

And these people who find Sebonde’s arguments too weak, who are ignorant of nothing, who govern the world, and who know all things:—

> *“What governs the sea, what rules the year, whether the planets move spontaneously or under compulsion, what obscures the moon, what the concordant discord of all things will or can effect;”*

have they not sometimes in their books sounded the difficulties they have met with of knowing their own being? We see very well that the finger

moves, that the foot moves, that some parts have motion of themselves without our leave, and that others work by our direction; that one sort of apprehension occasions blushing, another paleness; such an imagination works upon the spleen only, another upon the brain; one occasions laughter, another tears; another stupefies and astounds all our senses and arrests the movement of our members; at one object the stomach will rise, at another a member that lies somewhat lower: but how a spiritual impression should make such a breach into a massive and solid subject, and the nature of the connection and contexture of these admirable springs and movements, never man yet knew:—

> *"All things are uncertain in reason, and concealed in the majesty of nature,"*

says Pliny; and St. Augustin:—

> *"The manner whereby souls adhere to bodies is altogether marvellous, and cannot be conceived by man, and this union is man;"*

and yet it is not so much as doubted; for the opinions of men are received according to ancient beliefs, by authority and upon trust, as if it were religion and law: that which is commonly held about it is an accepted jargon; this assumed truth, with all its clutter of arguments and proofs, is admitted as a firm and solid body that is no more to be shaken, no further to be judged of; on the contrary, every one, as best he may, corroborates and fortifies this received belief with the utmost power of his reason, which is a supple utensil, pliable and to be accommodated to any figure: and thus the world comes to be filled with lies and fopperies. The reason that men do not doubt of so few things is that they never examine common impressions; they do not dig to the root where the faults and weakness lie; they only debate about the branches: they do not ask whether such and such a thing be true, but if it has been so and so understood; it is not inquired whether Galen said anything to purpose, but whether he said this or that. In truth, there was very good reason that this curb and constraint on the liberty of our judgments and this tyranny over our beliefs should be extended to the schools and arts; the god of scholastic knowledge is Aristotle; 'tis irreligion to question any of his decrees, as it was those of Lycurgus at Sparta; his doctrine is magisterial law, which, peradventure, is as false as another. I do not know why I should not as willingly accept either the ideas of Plato, or the atoms of Epicurus, or the plenum and vacuum of Leucippus and Democritus, or the water of Thales, or the infinity of nature of

Anaximander, or the air of Diogenes, or the numbers and symmetry of Pythagoras, or the infinity of Parmenides, or the One of Musaeus, or the water and fire of Apollodorus, or the similar parts of Anaxagoras, or the discord and friendship of Empedocles, or the fire of Heraclitus, or any other opinion of that infinite confusion of opinions and determinations which this fine human reason produces by its certitude and clear-sightedness in everything it meddles withal, as I should the opinion of Aristotle upon this subject of the principles of natural things; which principles he builds of three pieces, matter, form, and privation. And what can be more vain than to make inanity itself the cause of the production of things? privation is a negative: by what fancy could he make them the cause and original of things that are? And yet all this was not to be controverted, but as an exercise of logic; nothing was to be discussed to bring it into doubt, but only to defend the author of the school from foreign objections: his authority is the non ultra, beyond which it was not permitted to inquire.

It is very easy upon granted foundations to build whatever we please: for according to the law and ordering of this beginning, the other parts of the structure are easily carried on without any mishap. By this way, we find our reason well-grounded and discourse at a venture; for our masters prepossess and gain beforehand as much room in our belief as is necessary for them towards concluding afterwards what they please, as geometricians do by their postulates; the consent and approbation we allow them, giving them power to draw us to the right and left, and to whirl us about at their own pleasure. Whoever is believed upon his presuppositions is our master and our god: he will take the level of his foundations so ample and so easy that by them he may mount us up to the clouds, if he so please. In this practice and communication of science we have taken the saying of Pythagoras, “that every expert ought to be believed in his own art,” for currency; the dialectician refers the signification of words to the grammarian; the rhetorician borrows the state of arguments from the dialectician; the poet his measures from the musician; the geometrician his proportions from the arithmetician; the metaphysicians take physical conjectures as their foundations; for every science has its principles presupposed, by which human judgment is everywhere limited. If you drive against the barrier where the principal error lies, they have presently this sentence in their mouths; “that there is no disputing with persons who deny principles;” now men can have no principles, if not revealed to them by the

Divinity; of all the rest, the beginning, the middle and the end are nothing but dream and vapor. To those who contend upon presupposition, we must, on the contrary, presuppose to them the same axiom upon which the dispute is: for every human presupposition, and every declaration has as much authority one as another, if reason does not make the difference. Wherefore they are all to be put into the balance, and first the general and those that tyrannize over us. The persuasion of certainty is a certain testimony of folly and extreme uncertainty; and there are not a more foolish sort of men, nor that are less philosophers, than the Philodoxes of Plato: we must inquire whether fire be hot, whether snow be white, if we know of any such things as hard or soft.

And as to those answers of which they made old stories; as to him who doubted if there were any such thing as heat, whom they bid throw himself into the fire; and to him who denied the coldness of ice, whom they bade to put a cake of ice into his bosom; these are pitiful things, altogether unworthy of the profession of philosophy. If they had let us alone in our natural state, to receive the appearance of things without us according as they present themselves to us by our senses, and had permitted us to follow our own natural appetites, simple and regulated by the condition of our birth, they might have had reason to talk at that rate; but ’tis from them that we have learned to make ourselves judges of the world; ’tis from them that we derive this fancy, “that human reason is controller-general of all that is without and within the roof of heaven, that comprehends everything, that can do everything, by the means of which everything is known and understood.” This answer would be good amongst cannibals, who enjoy the happiness of a long, quiet, and peaceable life without Aristotle’s precepts, and without the knowledge of the name of physics; this answer would, peradventure, be of more value and greater force than all those they borrow from their reason and invention; of this all animals would be capable with us, and all things where the power of the law of nature is yet pure and simple; but this they have renounced. They must not tell us, “It is true, for you see and feel it to be so:” they must tell me whether I really feel what I think I feel; and if I do feel it, they must then tell me why I feel it, and how, and what; let them tell me the name, original, parts and junctures of heat and cold; the qualities of agent and patient; or let them give up their profession, which is not to admit or approve of anything but by the way of

reason; that is their test in all sorts of essays: but, certainly, ’tis a test full of falsity, error, weakness, and defect.

How can we better prove this than by itself? if we are not to believe her, when speaking of herself, she can hardly be thought fit to judge of foreign things: if she know anything, it must at least be her own being and abode; she is in the soul, and either a part or an effect of it; for true and essential reason, from which we by a false color borrow the name, is lodged in the bosom of the Almighty; there is her habitation and retreat, ’tis thence she imparts her rays, when God is pleased to impart any beam of it to mankind, as Pallas issued from her father’s head to communicate herself to the world.

Now let us see what human reason tells us of herself, and of the soul: not of the soul in general, of which almost all philosophy makes the celestial and first bodies participants; nor of that which Thales attributed even to things reputed inanimate, drawn on so to do by the consideration of the loadstone; but of that which appertains to us, and that we ought the best to know:—

> *“None know the nature of the soul, whether it be born with us, or be infused into us at our birth; whether it dies with us, or descends to the shades below, or whether the gods transmit it into other animals.”*

Crates and Dicaearchus were taught by it, that there was no soul at all, but that the body stirs by a natural motion; Plato, that it was a substance moving of itself: Thales, a nature without repose: Asclepiades, an exercising of the senses: Hesiod and Anaximander, a thing composed of earth and water; Parmenides, of earth and fire; Empedocles, of blood:—

> *“He vomits his bloody soul;”*

Posidonius, Cleanthes, and Galien, that it was heat or a hot complexion:—

> *“Their vigor is of fire, and a heavenly birth;”*

Hippocrates, a spirit diffused all over the body; Varro, that it was an air received at the mouth, heated in the lungs, moistened in the heart, and diffused throughout the whole body; Zeno, the quintessence of the four elements; Heraclides Ponticus, that it was the light; Xenocrates and the Egyptians, a movable number; the Chaldaeans, a virtue without any determinate form;

> *“That there is a certain vital habit which the Greeks call a harmony;”*

let us not forget Aristotle, who held the soul to be that which naturally causes the body to move, which he calls Entelechia, with as cold an invention as any of the rest; for he neither speaks of the essence, nor of the original, nor of the nature of the soul, but only takes notice of the effect; Lactantius, Seneca, and most of the dogmatists, have confessed that it was a thing they did not understand; and after all this enumeration of opinions,

"Of these opinions, which is the true, let some God determine,"

says Cicero; I know, by myself, says St. Bernard, how incomprehensible God is, seeing I cannot comprehend the parts of my own being. Heraclitus, who was of opinion that every place was full of souls and demons, nevertheless maintained that no one could advance so far towards the knowledge of the soul as ever to arrive at it, so profound was its essence.

Neither is there less controversy and debate about locating it. Hippocrates and Hierophilus place it in the ventricle of the brain; Democritus and Aristotle throughout the whole body:

"As when good health is often said to be a part of the body, whereas of a healthy man 'tis no part."

Epicurus, in the stomach;

"This is the seat of terror and fear; here is the place where joys exist:"

the Stoics, about and within the heart; Arasistratus, adjoining the membrane of the epicranion: Empedocles, in the blood, as also Moses, which was the reason why he interdicted eating the blood of beasts, because the soul is there seated: Strato placed it betwixt the eyebrows:—

"What figure the soul is of, or what part it inhabits, is not to be inquired into,"

says Cicero. I very willingly deliver this author to you in his own words: for why spoil the language of eloquence? besides that it were no great prize to steal the matter of his inventions; they are neither very frequent, nor of any great weight, and sufficiently known. But the reason why Chrysippus argues it to be about the heart, as all the rest of that sect do, is not to be omitted. "It is," says he, "because when we would affirm anything, we lay our hand upon our breasts; and when we will pronounce me, which signifies I, we let the lower mandible sink towards the stomach." This place ought not to be over-slipped without a remark upon the futility of so great a man; for besides that these considerations are infinitely light in

themselves, the last is only a proof to the Greeks that they have their souls lodged in that part: no human judgment is so vigilant that it does not sometime sleep. Why should we be afraid to speak? We see the Stoics, fathers of human prudence, have found out that the soul of a man crushed under a ruin, long labors and strives to get out, like a mouse caught in a trap, before it can disengage itself from the burden. Some hold that the world was made to give bodies, by way of punishment, to the spirits, fallen by their own fault, from the purity wherein they had been created, the first creation having been no other than incorporeal; and that according as they are more or less remote from their spirituality, so are they more or less lightly or heavily incorporated, and that thence proceeds the variety of so much created matter. But the spirit that, for his punishment, was invested with the body of the sun, must certainly have a very rare and particular measure of thirst.

The extremities of our perquisition all fall into and terminate in a misty astonishment, as Plutarch says, of the testimony of histories, that as in charts and maps the utmost bounds of known countries are filled up with marshes, impenetrable forests, deserts, and uninhabitable places; and this is the reason why the most gross and childish ravings are most found in those authors who treat of the most elevated subjects, and proceed the furthest in them, losing themselves in their own curiosity and presumption. The beginning and the end of knowledge are equally foolish: observe to what a pitch Plato flies in his poetic clouds; take notice there of the jargon of the gods; but what did he dream of when he defined man to be a two-legged animal, without feathers: giving those who had a mind to deride him, a pleasant occasion; for, having pulled off the feathers of a live capon, they went about calling it the Man of Plato.

And what of the Epicureans? out of what simplicity did they first imagine that their atoms, which they said were bodies having some weight and a natural motion downward, had made the world: till they were put in mind by their adversaries that, according to this description, it was impossible they should unite and join to one another, their fall being so direct and perpendicular, and producing parallel lines throughout? wherefore they were fain thereafter to add a fortuitous and lateral motion, and moreover, to furnish their atoms with hooked tails, by which they might unite and cling to one another; and even then do not those who attack them upon this second invention put them hardly to it? “If the atoms have by

chance formed so many sorts of figures, why did it never fall out that they made a house or a shoe? why, at the same rate, should we not believe that an infinite number of Greek letters, strewn all over a place, might fall into the contexture of the Iliad?”

“Whatever is capable of reason,” says Zeno, “is better than that which is not capable: there is nothing better than the world: the world is therefore capable of reason.” Cotta, by this same argumentation, makes the world a mathematician; and ’tis also made a musician and an organist by this other argumentation of Zeno: “The whole is more than a part; we are capable of wisdom, and are part of the world: therefore the world is wise.” There are infinite like examples, not merely of arguments that are false in themselves, but silly; that do not hold together, and that accuse their authors not so much of ignorance as of imprudence, in the reproaches the philosophers throw in one another’s teeth upon the dissensions in their opinions and sects.

Whoever should accumulate a sufficient fardel of the fooleries of human wisdom, might tell wonders. I willingly muster these few as patterns in their way not less profitable than more moderate instructions. Let us judge by these what opinion we are to have of man, of his sense and reason, when in these great persons, who have raised human knowledge so high, so many gross and manifest errors and defects are to be found!

For my part, I would rather believe that they have treated of knowledge casually, and as a toy with both hands, and have contended about reason as of a vain and frivolous instrument, setting on foot all sorts of inventions and fancies, sometimes more sinewy, and sometimes weaker. This same Plato, who defines man as if he were a fowl, says elsewhere, after Socrates, “that he does not, in truth, know what man is, and that he is a member of the world the hardest to understand.” By this variety and instability of opinions, they tacitly lead us as it were by the hand to this resolution of their irresolution. They profess not always to deliver their opinions barefaced and apparent; they have one while disguised them in the fabulous shadows of poesy, and another while under some other mask: our imperfection carries this also along with it, that raw meat is not always proper for our stomachs; we must dry, alter, and mix it. These men do the same; they often conceal their real opinions and judgments, and falsify them to accommodate themselves to the public use. They will not make an open profession of ignorance and of the imbecility of human reason, that

they may not frighten children; but they sufficiently discover it to us under the appearance of a troubled and inconstant science.

I advised a person in Italy, who had a great mind to speak Italian, that provided he only had a desire to make himself understood, without being ambitious otherwise to excel, that he should simply make use of the first words that came to the tongue's end, Latin, French, Spanish or Gascon, and then by adding the Italian termination, he could not fail of hitting upon some idiom of the country, either Tuscan, Roman, Venetian, Piedmontese, or Neapolitan, and to apply himself to some one of those many forms: I say the same of philosophy: she has so many faces, so much variety, and has said so many things, that all our dreams and fantasies are there to be found; human imagination can conceive nothing good or bad that is not there:—

> *"Nothing can be so absurdly said, that is not said by some of the philosophers."*

And I am the more willing to expose my own whimsies to the public, forasmuch as though they are spun out of myself and without any pattern, I know they will be found related to some ancient humor, and there will be no want of some one to say, "That's whence he took it." My manners are natural; I have not called in the assistance of any discipline to frame them: but weak as they are, when it came into my head to lay them open to the world's view, and that, to expose them to the light in a little more decent garb, I went about to help them with reasons and examples: it was a wonder to myself incidentally to find them conformable to so many philosophical discourses and examples. I learned not what was my rule of life, till it was worn out and spent: a new figure, an unpremeditate and accidental philosopher.

But to return to our soul; that Plato has placed reason in the brain, anger in the heart, and concupiscence in the liver, 'tis likely that it was rather an interpretation of the movements of the soul than that he intended a division and separation of it, as of a body, into several members. And the most likely of their opinions is, that 'tis always a soul, that, by its faculty, reasons, remembers, comprehends, judges, desires, and exercises all its other operations by divers instruments of the body; as the pilot guides his ship according to his experience of it; now tightening, now slacking the cordage, one while hoisting the mainyard or moving the rudder, by one and the same power carrying on so many several effects: and that it is lodged in the brain, which appears from this that the wounds and accidents which

touch that part immediately offend the faculties of the soul; and ’tis not incongruous that it should thence diffuse itself into the other parts of the body:—

“Phoebus never deviates from his central way, yet enlightens all things with his rays;”

as the sun sheds from heaven its light and influence, and fills the world with them:—

“The other part of the soul, diffused all over the body, obeys the divinity and great name of the mind.”

Some have said, that there was a general soul, as it were a great body, from which all the particular souls were extracted, and thither again returned, always restoring themselves to that universal matter:—

“They believe that God circulates through all the earth, sea, and high heavens; hence cattle, men, flocks, every kind of wild animals, draw the breath of life, and thither return when the body is dissolved: nor is there any death:”

others, that they only rejoined and reunited themselves to it; others, that they were produced from the divine substance; others, by the angels of fire and air: others, that they were from all antiquity; some, that they were created at the very point of time the bodies wanted them; others made them descend from the orb of the moon, and return thither; the generality of the ancients, that they were begotten from father to son, after a like manner and production with all other natural things; raising their argument from the likeness of children to their fathers;

“The strong spring from the strong and good;”

and that we see descend from fathers to their children, not only bodily marks, but moreover a resemblance of humors, complexions, and inclinations of the soul:—

“For why should ferocity ever spring from the fierce lion’s seed? why craft from the fox? why fear from the stag? Why should his readiness to fly descend to him from his father? . . . but that the soul has germs like the body, and still increases as the body increases?”

that thereupon the Divine justice is grounded, punishing in the children the faults of their fathers: forasmuch as the contagion of paternal vices is in some sort imprinted in the soul of children, and that the disorders of their will extend to them: moreover, that if souls had any other derivation than a natural consequence, and that they had been some other thing out of the

body, they would retain some memory of their first being, the natural faculties that are proper to them of discoursing, reasoning, and remembering being considered:—

> *"If it be infused in our bodies at our birth, why do we retain no memory of our preceding life, and why not remember anything we did before?"*

for to make the condition of our souls such as we would have it to be, we must presuppose them all-knowing, when in their natural simplicity and purity; and, this being so, they had been such, while free from the prison of the body, as well before they entered into it, as we hope they shall be after they are gone out of it: and this former knowledge, it should follow, they should remember being yet in the body, as Plato said, "That what we learn is no other than a remembrance of what we knew before;" a thing which every one by experience may maintain to be false; forasmuch in the first place, as we remember what we have been taught: and as, if the memory purely performed its office, it would at least suggest to us something more than what we have been taught; secondly, that which she knew, being in her purity, was a true knowledge, knowing things, as they are, by her divine intelligence: whereas here we make her receive falsehood and vice, when we tell her of these, and herein she cannot employ her reminiscence, that image and conception having never been planted in her. To say that the corporeal presence so suffocates her natural faculties that they are there utterly extinguished, is, first, contrary to this other belief of acknowledging her power to be so great, and those operations of it that men sensibly perceive in this life to be so admirable, as to have thereby concluded this divinity and past eternity, and the immortality to come:—

> *"For if the mind is so changed that it has lost all memory of past things, this, I confess, appears to me not far from death."*

Furthermore 'tis here with us, and not elsewhere, that the powers and effects of the soul ought to be considered: all the rest of her perfections are vain and useless to her; 'tis by her present condition that all her immortality is to be rewarded and paid, and of the life of man only that she is to render an account. It had been injustice to have stripped her of her means and power; to have disarmed her, in order in the time of her captivity and imprisonment, of her weakness and infirmity, in the time wherein she is under force and constraint, to pass my sentence and condemnation of infinite and perpetual duration; and insist, upon the consideration of so

short a time, peradventure a life of but an hour or two, or at the most but of a century, which have no more proportion to infinity than an instant: from this momentary interval, to ordain and definitely determine her whole being: it were an unreasonable disproportion to acquire an eternal recompense in return for so short a life. Plato, to save himself from this inconvenience, will have future rewards limited to the term of a hundred years, relatively to human duration; and among ourselves several have given them temporal limits: by this they judged that the generation of the soul followed the common condition of human things, as also her life, according to the opinion of Epicurus and Democritus, which has been the most received, pursuant to these fine notions: that we see it born as soon as the body is capable of it; that we see it increase in vigor as the corporeal vigor increases; that its feebleness in infancy is very manifest, then its better form and maturity, and finally, its declensions in old age, and its decrepitude:—

"We see that the mind is born with the body, with it increases, and with it decays:"

they perceived it to be capable of divers passions, and agitated with several painful motions, whence it fell into lassitude and uneasiness; capable of alteration and change, of cheerfulness, of dulness, of faintness; subject to diseases and injuries of its own, as the stomach or the foot:—

"We see sick minds cured as well as sick bodies by the help of medicines:"

dazzled and intoxicated with the fumes of wine; jostled from her seat by the vapors of a burning fever; laid asleep by the application of some medicaments, and roused by others:—

"The soul must, of necessity, be corporeal, for we see it suffer from wounds and blows:"

they saw it astounded and all its faculties overthrown by the mere bite of a mad dog, and, in that condition, to have no such stability of reason, no such sufficiency, no such virtue, no philosophical resolution, no such resistance as could exempt it from the subjection of these accidents; the slaver of a contemptible cur, shed upon the hand of Socrates, to shake all his wisdom and all his so great and well-regulated imaginations, and so to annihilate them as that there remained no trace or footstep of his former knowledge:—

"The power of the soul is disturbed, overthrown, and distracted by the same poison:"

and this poison to find no more resistance in this great soul than in that of an infant of four years old: a poison sufficient to make all philosophy, if it were incarnate, furious and mad; insomuch that Cato, so stiff-necked against death and fortune, could not endure the sight of a looking-glass or of water, confounded with horror and affright at the danger of falling, by the contagion of a mad dog, into the disease called by physicians hydrophobia: —

"The violence of the disease diffused throughout the limbs, disturbs the soul, as in the salt sea the foaming waves rage with the force of the strong winds."

Now, as to this particular, philosophy has sufficiently armed man to encounter all other accidents, either with patience, or if the search of that costs too dear, by an infallible defeat, in totally depriving himself of all sentiment: but these are expedients, that are only of use to a soul being itself and in its full power, capable of reason and deliberation: but not at all proper for this inconvenience, where even in a philosopher, the soul becomes the soul of a madman, troubled, overturned, and lost: which many occasions may produce, as a too vehement agitation that any violent passion of the soul may beget in itself, or a wound in a certain part of the person, or vapors from the stomach, any of which may stupefy the understanding and turn the brain:—

"In the ailments of the body the mind often wanders, grows disordered and wild, and sometimes by a heavy lethargy is cast into a profound and everlasting sleep; the eyes close, the head sinks."

The philosophers, methinks, have scarcely touched this string, no more than another of the same importance; they have this dilemma continually in their mouths to console our mortal condition: "The soul is either mortal or immortal; if mortal, it will suffer no pain; if immortal, it will change for the better." They never touch the other branch: "What if she change for the worse?" And they leave to the poets the menaces of future torments; but thereby they make for themselves a good game. These are two omissions that I often meet with in their discourses: I return to the first.

This soul loses the use of the sovereign stoical good, so constant and so firm: our fine human wisdom must here yield and give up its arms. As to the rest, they also considered, by the vanity of human reason, that the

mixture and association of two so contrary things as the mortal and the immortal, is unimaginable:—

> “*For to join the mortal and the eternal, and think they can agree and discharge mutual functions, is folly. For what things are more differing or more distinct betwixt themselves, and more opposed, than the mortal and the immortal and enduring joined together in order to undergo cruel storms?*”

Moreover, they perceived the soul declining in death, as well as the body:—

> “*It yields up the body to old age:*”

which, according to Zeno, the image of sleep sufficiently demonstrates to us; for he looks upon it as a fainting and fall of the soul, as well as of the body:—

> “*He thinks the mind is contracted, and that it slips and falls.*”

And what they perceived in some, that the soul maintained its force and vigor to the last gasp of life, they attributed to the variety of diseases; as it is observable in men at the last extremity, that some retain one sense and some another; one the hearing, and another the smell, without any alteration; and that there is no so universal a deprivation, that some parts do not remain entire and vigorous:—

> “*Not otherwise than if, when a sick man’s foot may be in pain, yet his head be free from any suffering.*”

The sight of our judgment has the same relation to truth that the owl’s eyes have to the splendor of the sun, says Aristotle. By what can we better convict it than by so gross blindness in so apparent a light? For as to the contrary opinion of the immortality of the soul, which Cicero says was first introduced, at all events by the testimony of books, by Pherecides Syrius in the time of King Tullius, though others attribute it to Thales, and others to others, ’tis the part of human science that is treated of with the most doubt and the greatest reservation. The most positive dogmatists are, on this point, principally constrained to fly to the refuge of the Academy. No one knows what Aristotle has established upon this subject, any more than all the ancients in general, who handle it with a wavering belief:—

> “*A thing more satisfactory in the promise than in the proof;*”

he conceals himself in clouds of words and difficult and unintelligible fancies, and has left to his sect as great a dispute about his judgment as about the matter itself.

Two things rendered this opinion plausible to them: one, that without the immortality of souls there would be nothing whereon to ground the vain hopes of glory, which is a consideration of wonderful repute in the world; the other, that it is a very profitable impression, as Plato says, that vices, though they escape the discovery and cognizance of human justice, are still within the reach of the divine, which will pursue them even after the death of the guilty. Man is excessively solicitous to prolong his being, and has, to the utmost of his power, provided for it; monuments are erected for the conservation of the body, and from glory to transmit the name; impatient of his fortune, he has employed all his wit and opinion in the rebuilding of himself, and in the sustenance of himself by his productions. The soul, by reason of its anxiety and impotence, being unable to stand by itself, wanders up and down to seek support in consolations, hopes, and other external circumstances, to which she adheres and fixes; and how light or fantastic soever invention pronounces them to it, relies more willingly and with greater assurance upon them, than upon itself. But ’tis wonderful to observe how short the most constant and firm maintainers of this just and clear persuasion of the immortality of the soul fall, and how weak their arguments are, when they go about to prove it by human reason:—

“They are dreams, not of the teacher, but of the wisher,”

says one of the ancients. By which testimony man may know that he owes the truth he himself finds out to fortune and accident; since, even when it is fallen into his hand, he has not wherewith to hold and maintain it, and that his reason has not force to make use of it. All things produced by our own reasoning and understanding, whether true or false, are subject to incertitude and controversy. ’Twas for the chastisement of our pride, and for the instruction of our misery and incapacity, that God wrought the perplexity and confusion of the old tower of Babel. Whatever we undertake without His assistance, whatever we see without the lamp of His grace, is but vanity and folly; we corrupt and debase by our weakness the very essence of truth, which is uniform and constant, when fortune puts it into our possession. What course soever man takes of himself, God still permits it to come to the same confusion, the image whereof He so vividly represents to us in the just chastisement wherewith He crushed Nimord’s presumption, and frustrated the vain attempt of his pyramid:—

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

The diversity of idioms and languages with which He disturbed this work, what are they other than this infinite and perpetual altercation and discordance of opinions and reasons, which accompany and confound the vain building of human wisdom, and to very good effect? For what would hold us if we had but the least grain of knowledge? This saint has very much obliged me:—

> *"The very obscurity of the truth is either an exercise of humility or a crushing of pride."*

To what a pitch of presumption and insolence do we raise our blindness and folly!

But to return to my subject: it was truly very good reason that we should be beholden to God only, and to the favor of His grace, for the truth of so noble a belief, since from His sole bounty we receive the fruit of immortality, which consists in the enjoyment of eternal beatitude. Let us ingenuously confess that God alone has dictated it to us, and faith; for 'tis no lesson of nature and our own reason: and whoever will inquire into his own being and power, both within and without, otherwise than by this divine privilege: whoever shall consider man impartially and without flattery, will see nothing in him of efficacy or faculty that relishes of anything but death and earth. The more we give, and confess to owe and render to God, we do it with the greater Christianity. That which this Stoic philosopher says he holds from the fortuitous consent of the popular voice, had it not been better had he held it from God?—

> *"When we discourse of the immortality of minds, the consent of men that either fear or adore the infernal powers is of no small moment. I make use of this public persuasion."*

Now, the weakness of human arguments upon this subject is particularly manifested by the fabulous circumstances they have superadded as consequences of this opinion, to find out of what condition this immortality of ours was. Let us omit the Stoics:—

> *"They give us the enjoyment (of life), as they do to crows; they say that minds shall continue long, that they shall continue always they deny:"*

who gives to soul a life after this, but finite. The most universal and received fancy, and which continues down to our times in various places, is that of which they make Pythagoras the author: not that he was the original inventor, but because it received a great deal of weight and repute by the

authority of his approbation; and this is, that souls at their departure out of us do nothing but shift from one body to another, from a lion to a horse, from a horse to a king, continually travelling at this rate from habitation to habitation. And he himself said that he remembered to have been Aethalides, since that Euphorbus, and afterwards Hermotimus, and finally from Pyrrhus was passed into Pythagoras, having a memory of himself of two hundred and six years. Some have added that these very souls at times remount to heaven and come down again:—

> *"O father, is it to be believed that some sublime souls should hence mount to heaven and thence return to lumpish bodies? what is the so dire affection for life in wretched (men?)."*

Origen makes them eternally to go and come, from a better to a worse estate. The opinion that Varro makes mention of is, that after four hundred and forty years' revolution they are reunited to their first bodies; Chrysippus held that this would happen after a certain space of time unknown and unlimited. Plato, who professes to have derived from Pindar and the ancient poets the belief that souls are to undergo infinite vicissitudes of mutation, for which the soul is prepared, having neither punishment nor reward in the other world, but what is temporal, as its life here is but temporal, concludes that it has a singular knowledge of the affairs of heaven, of hell, of the world, through all which it has passed, repassed, and made stay in several voyages; fit matters for her memory. Observe her progress elsewhere: "he who has lived well is reunited to the star to which he is assigned: he who has lived ill removes into a woman, and, if he does not there reform, is again removed into a beast of condition suitable to his vicious manners, and will see no end of his punishments till he return to his natural constitution, and has by the force of reason purged himself from the gross, stupid, and elementary qualities he was polluted with." But I will not forget the objection the Epicureans make against this transmigration from one body to another; 'tis a pleasant one: they ask, "What expedient would be found out if the number of dying should chance to be greater than that of those who are coming into the world? for the souls turned out of their old habitation would scuffle and crowd which should first get possession of this new lodging." And they further demand, "how they should pass away their time whilst waiting till a new quarter were made ready for them: or, on the contrary, if more animals should be born than die, the bodies, they say, would be but in an ill condition whilst awaiting a soul to be infused into

them; and it would fall out that some bodies would die before they had been alive:—

> *"In fine, it seems ridiculous that souls should be always awaiting the coupling and birth of animals, and that immortals should in vast numbers crowd about mortal germs, and strive and contend with eagerness which should first possess them."*

Others have arrested the soul in the body of the deceased, with it to animate serpents, worms, and other beasts which are said to be bred out of the corruption of our limbs, and even out of our ashes; others divide it into two parts, the one mortal, the other immortal; others make it corporeal, and nevertheless immortal; some make it immortal without science or knowledge. And some have believed that devils were made of the souls of the damned, and this has been the fancy of some among ourselves, as Plutarch thinks that gods are made of those that are saved; for there are few things which that author is so positive in as he is in this; ever maintaining, elsewhere, a doubtful and ambiguous way of expression. "We are to hold," says he, "and steadfastly to believe, that the souls of virtuous men, both according to nature and to the divine justice, become saints, and from saints demi-gods, and from demi-gods, after they are perfectly, as in sacrifices of purgation, cleansed and purified, being delivered from all passibility and all mortality, they become, not by any civil decree but in real truth, and according to all probability of reason, entire and perfect gods, receiving a most happy and glorious end." But who desires to see him, he who is the most sober and moderate of the whole tribe, lay about him with greater boldness, and relate his miracles upon this subject, I refer him to his Treatise of the Moon, and his Daemon of Socrates, where he may, as evidently as in any other place whatever, satisfy himself that the mysteries of philosophy have many strange things in common with those of poesy; the human understanding losing itself in attempting to sound and search all things to the bottom, just as we, tired and worn out with a long course of life, relapse into infancy. Such are the fine and certain instructions which we extract from human knowledge concerning the soul.

There is not less temerity in what it teaches us touching the corporeal parts. Let us choose one or two examples, for otherwise we should lose ourselves in this vast and troubled ocean of medicinal errors. Let us see whether, at least, they agree about the matter whereof men produce one another; for as to their first production it is no wonder, if in a thing so high

and so long since past, human understanding finds itself perplexed and dissipated. Archelaus the naturalist, whose disciple and favorite Socrates was, according to Aristoxenus, said, that both men and beasts were made of a lacteous slime, expressed by the heat of the earth: Pythagoras says, that our seed is the foam of our better blood: Plato, that it is the distillation of the marrow of the backbone, which he argues from the circumstance that that part is first sensible of being weary of the work: Alcmeon, that it is part of the substance of the brain, and this is shown, says he, inasmuch as it causes weakness of the eyes in those who immoderately labor in that exercise: Democritus, that it is a substance extracted from the whole mass of the body: Epicurus, that it is extracted from soul and body: Aristotle, an excrement drawn from the aliment of the blood, the last which is diffused through our members: others, that it is blood concocted and digested by the heat of the genitories, which they judge by reason that in excessive endeavors a man voids pure blood; wherein there seems to be the most likelihood, could a man extract any probability from so infinite a confusion. Now, to bring this seed to do its work, how many contrary opinions are set on foot. Aristotle and Democritus are of opinion that women have no sperm, and that ’tis nothing but a sweat that they distil in the heat of pleasure and motion, and that contributes nothing at all to generation: Galen, on the contrary, and his followers believe that without the fusion of seeds there can be no generation. Here, again, are the physicians, the philosophers, the lawyers, and the divines by the ears with our wives about the dispute, for what time women carry their fruit; and I, for my part, by the example of myself, side with those who maintain that a woman goes eleven months with child. The world is built upon this experience; there is not so simple a little woman that cannot give her judgment in all these controversies, and yet we cannot agree.

Here is enough to verify that man is no better instructed in the knowledge of himself in his corporeal than in his spiritual part. We have proposed himself to himself, and his reason to his reason, to see what she could say. I think I have sufficiently demonstrated how little she understands herself in herself; and who understands not himself in himself, in what can he possibly understand?—

> *“As if he could understand the measure of anything that knows not his own.”*

Truly, Protagoras told us a pretty flam, in making man the measure of all things who never knew so much as his own; if it be not he, his dignity will not permit that any other creature should have this advantage; now, he being so contrary in himself, and one judgment so incessantly subverting another, this favorable proposition was but a mockery, which led us necessarily to conclude the nullity of the compass and the compasser. When Thales reputes the knowledge of man very difficult for man, he, at the same time, gives him to understand, that all other knowledge is impossible to him.

You, for whom I have taken the pains, contrary to my custom, to write so long a discourse, will not refuse to maintain your Sebonde by the ordinary forms of arguing wherein you are every day instructed, and in this will exercise your study. For this last fencing trick is never to be made use of but as an extreme remedy; ’tis a desperate thrust, wherein you are to quit your own arms to make your adversary abandon his: and a secret sleight, which must be very rarely and very reservedly put in practice. ’Tis great temerity to lose yourself, that you may destroy another; you must not die to be revenged, as Gobrias did; for, hotly grappling in combat with a Persian lord, Darius coming in, sword in hand, and fearing to strike lest he should kill Gobrias, he called out to him boldly to fall on, though he should run them both through at once. I have known weapons and conditions of single combat, without quarter, and wherein he who proposed them, put himself and his adversary upon terms of inevitable death to them both, censured as unjust. The Portuguese, in the Indian Sea, took certain Turks prisoners, who, impatient of their captivity, resolved (and it succeeded), by striking some ship nails against one another and making a spark fall into the barrels of powder that were in the place where they were confined, to blow up and reduce themselves, their masters, and the vessel to ashes. We touch here the utmost limits of the sciences, whose extremity is vicious, as in virtue. Keep yourselves in the common road; it is not good to be so subtle and cunning. Remember the Tuscan proverb:—

“If you draw your thread too fine, it will break.”

I advise you, in all your opinions and meditations, as well as in your manners and all other things, to keep yourself moderate and reserved, and to avoid all novelty and strangeness: I am an enemy to all out-of-the-way proceedings. You who by the authority of your greatness, and yet more by the advantages which those qualities give you that are more your own, may,

with the twinkle of an eye, command whom you please, should give this charge to some professor of letters, who might, after a much better manner, have sustained and illustrated these things to you. But here is as much as you will stand in need of.

Epicurus said of the laws, that the worst were so necessary for us, that without them men would devour one another; and Plato affirms, that without laws we should live like beasts. Our mind is a wandering, dangerous, and temerarious tool; it is hard to couple any order or measure to it; and in my time, those who are endued with some rare excellence above others, or any extraordinary vivacity of understanding, we see almost all of them lash out into license of opinions and manners; ’tis almost a miracle to find one temperate and socially tractable. There’s all the reason in the world to limit the human mind within the strictest limits possible: in study, as in all the rest, we ought to have its steps and advances numbered and fixed, and that the limits of its inquisition be bounded by art. It is curbed and fettered by religions, laws, customs, sciences, precepts, mortal and immortal penalties and rewards; and yet we see that by its volubility and dissolvability it escapes from all these bounds; ’tis a vain body which has nothing to lay hold on; or to seize a various and difform body, incapable of being either bound or held. Truly, there are few souls so regular, firm, and well descended that are to be trusted with their own conduct, and that can, with moderation and without temerity, sail in the liberty of their own judgments beyond the common and received opinions: ’tis more expedient to put them under pupilage. The mind is a dangerous weapon, even to the possessor, if he knows not discreetly how to use it: and there is not a beast to whom a headboard can more properly be given to keep his looks down and before his feet, and to hinder him from wandering here and there out of the tracks which custom and the laws have laid before him: therefore it will be much better for you to keep yourself in the beaten path, let it be what it will, than to fly out at a venture with this unbridled liberty. If any of these new doctors should seek to exercise his ingenuity in your presence, at the expense both of your soul and his own, to avoid this dangerous plague, which is every day laid in your way, this preservative, in extremist necessity, will prevent the contagion of this poison from offending either you or your company.

The liberty, then, and frolic forwardness of these ancient wits, produced in philosophy and human sciences, several sects of different

opinions, each undertaking to judge and make choice of what he would stick to and maintain. But now that men go all one way,

> *“Who are so tied and obliged to certain beliefs, that they are bound to defend even those they do not approve,”*

and that we receive the arts by civil authority and decree, so that the schools have but one pattern and a like circumscribed institution and discipline, we no longer take notice what the coin weighs and is really worth, but every one receives it according to the estimate that the common approbation and the ordinary course put upon it: the alloy is not disputed, but for how much it is current. In like manner, all things pass; we take physic as we do geometry, and tricks of hocus-pocus, enchantments, codpiece points, correspondence with the souls of the dead, prognostications, domifications, and even that ridiculous pursuit of the philosopher’s stone, all things pass for current pay, without scruple or contradiction. We need to know no more but that Mars’ house is in the middle of the triangle of the hand, that of Venus in the thumb, and that of Mercury in the little finger; that when the table-line cuts the tubercle of the forefinger, ’tis a sign of cruelty; that when it falls short of the middle finger, and that the natural medium line makes an angle with the vital in the same side, ’tis a sign of a miserable death; that if, in a woman, the natural line be open, and does not close the angle with the vital, this denotes that she will not be very chaste; I leave you to judge whether a man, thus qualified, may not pass with reputation and esteem in all companies.

Theophrastus said that human knowledge, guided by the senses, might judge of the causes of things to a certain degree: but that being arrived at extreme and first causes, it must stop short, and retire, by reason either of its own infirmity, or the difficulty of things. ’Tis a moderate and gentle opinion, that our own understanding may conduct us to the knowledge of some things, and that it has certain measures of power, beyond which ’tis temerity to employ it; this opinion is plausible, and introduced by men of well-composed minds. But ’tis hard to limit our mind; ’tis inquisitive and greedy, and will no more stop at a thousand, than at fifty paces; having experimentally found that, wherein one man has failed, another has hit; that what was unknown to one age, the age following has explained: and that arts and sciences are not cast in a mould, but are formed and perfected by degrees, by often handling and polishing, as bears leisurely lick their cubs into shape; what my force cannot discover, I do not yet desist to sound and

to try; and, handling and kneading this new matter over and over again, turning and heating it, I lay open to him, that shall succeed me, a kind of facility to enjoy it more at his ease, and make it more manageable and supple for him:—

"As Hymettian wax grows softer in the sun, and tempered by the fingers assumes various forms, and is rendered fit for use:"

as much will the second do to the third, which is the reason that difficulty ought not to make me despair; and my own incapacity as little; for 'tis only my own.

Man is as capable of all things, as of some: and if he confess, as Theophrastus says, the ignorance of first causes and principles, let him boldly surrender to me all the rest of his knowledge; if he is defective in foundation, his reason is on the ground: disputation and inquisition have no other aim but principles; if this does not stop his career, he runs into an infinite irresolution:—

"One thing can be no more or less comprehended than another, because there is only one definition for comprehending all things."

Now 'tis very likely, that if the soul knew anything, it would in the first place know itself; and if it knew anything out of itself, it would be its own body and case, before anything else: if we see the gods of physic, to this very day, debating about our anatomy:—

"Vulcan against, for Troy Apollo stood:"

when are we to expect that they will be agreed? We are nearer neighbors to ourselves than the whiteness of snow or the weight of stones are to us: if man does not know himself, how should he know his functions and powers? It is not, peradventure, that we have not some real knowledge in us, but 'tis by chance; and forasmuch as errors are received into our soul by the same way, after the same manner, and by the same conduct, it has not wherewithal to distinguish them, nor wherewithal to choose the truth from falsehood.

The Academics admitted a certain inclination of judgment, and thought it too crude to say, "that it was not more likely that snow was white than black, and that we were no more assured of the motion of a stone thrown by the hand than of that of the eighth sphere;" and to avoid this difficulty and strangeness, which can, in truth, not easily lodge in our imagination, though they conclude that we are in no sort capable of knowledge, and that truth is engulfed in so profound an abyss as is not to be penetrated by human sight;

yet do they acknowledge some things to be more likely than others, and received into their judgment this faculty that we have a power to incline to one appearance more than to another: they allowed this propension, interdicting all resolution. The opinion of the Pyrrhonians is more bold, and also more likely: for this Academic inclination, and this propension to one proposition rather than to another, what is it other than a recognition of some more apparent truth in this than in that? If our understanding be capable of the form, lineaments, comportment, and face of truth, it would as well see it entire as by halves, springing and imperfect: this appearance of likelihood, which makes them rather take the left hand than the right, augments it: multiply this ounce of verisimilitude that turns the scales, to a hundred, to a thousand ounces: it will happen in the end that the balance will itself end the controversy, and determine one choice and one entire truth. But how is it they suffer themselves to incline to and be swayed by probability, if they know not the truth itself? How should they know the similitude of that whereof they do not know the essence? Either we can absolutely judge, or absolutely we cannot. If our intellectual and sensible faculties are without foot or foundation, if they only float and waver about, ’tis to no purpose that we suffer our judgment to be carried away by any part of their operation, what appearance soever it may seem to present to us; and the surest and most happy seat of our understanding would be that where it kept itself temperate, upright and inflexible, without tottering and without agitation:—

> *“As between things that seem true or false, it signifies nothing to the assent of the mind.”*

That things do not lodge in us in their form and essence, and do not there make their entry by their own force and authority we sufficiently see: because if it were so, we should receive them after the same manner: wine would have the same relish with the sick as with the healthful; he who has his finger chapped or benumbed would find the same hardness in wood or iron that he handles that another does; outside subjects, then, submit themselves to our disposal, and are seated in us as we please. Now, if on our part we received anything without alteration, if human grasp were capable and strong enough to seize on truth by our own means, these being common to all men, this truth would be conveyed from hand to hand from one to another; and at least there would be some one thing to be found in the world, amongst so many as there are, that would be believed by men with a

universal consent: but this, that there is no one proposition that is not debated and controverted amongst us, or that may not be, makes it very manifest that our natural judgment does not very clearly comprehend what it embraces; for my judgment cannot make itself accepted by the judgment of my companion, which is a sign that I seized it by some other means than by a natural power that is in me and in all other men.

Let us lay aside this infinite confusion of opinions which we see even amongst the philosophers themselves, and this perpetual and universal dispute about the knowledge of things: for this is very truly presupposed, that men—I mean those highest and best born in knowledge and of the greatest parts—are not agreed about any one thing, not even that heaven is over our heads, for they that doubt of everything also doubt of that; and they who deny that we are able to comprehend anything, say that we have not comprehended that the heaven is over our heads; and these two opinions are without comparison the stronger in number.

Besides this infinite diversity and division through the trouble that our judgment gives to ourselves, and the uncertainty that every one is sensible of in himself, ’tis easy to perceive that its seat is very unstable and unsecure. How variously do we judge of things? how often do we alter our opinions? What I hold and believe to-day, I hold and believe with my whole belief: all my instruments and engines seize and take hold of this opinion, and become responsible to me for it as much as in them lies; I could not embrace nor preserve any truth with greater assurance than I do this; I am wholly and entirely possessed with it: but has it not befallen me, not only once, but a thousand times, and every day, to have embraced some other thing with the same instruments, and in the same condition, which I have since judged to be false? A man must, at least, become wise at his own expense; if I have often found myself betrayed under this color, if my touch prove ordinarily false and my balance unequal and unjust, what assurance can I now have more than at other times? is it not folly to suffer myself to be so often deceived by my guide? Nevertheless, let fortune remove and shift us five hundred times from place to place, let her do nothing but incessantly empty and fill into our belief, as into a vessel, other and other opinions, yet still the present and the last is the one certain and infallible: for this we must abandon goods, honor, life, health, and all:—

> *“The last thing we find out is ever the best, and makes us disrelish all the former.”*

Whatever is preached to us, whatever we learn, we should still remember that it is man that gives and man that receives; ’tis a mortal hand that presents it to us, ’tis a mortal hand that accepts it. The things that come to us from heaven have the sole right and authority of persuasion, the sole mark of truth: which also we do not see with our own eyes nor receive by our own means: that great and sacred image could not abide in so wretched a habitation, if God, for this end, did not prepare it, if God did not, by His particular and supernatural grace and favor, fortify and reform it. At least our frail and defective condition ought to make us comport ourselves with more reservedness and moderation in our innovations and changes: we ought to remember that whatever we receive into the understanding we often receive things that are false, and that it is by the same instruments that so often give themselves the lie, and are so often deceived.

Now, it is no wonder they should so often contradict themselves, being so easy to be turned and swayed by very light occurrences. It is certain that our apprehension, our judgment, and the faculties of the soul in general, suffer according to the movements and alterations of the body, which alterations are continual: are not our wits more sprightly, our memory more prompt, our discourse more lively, in health than in sickness? Do not joy and gaiety make us receive subjects that present themselves to our souls, quite otherwise than care and melancholy? Do you believe that the verses of Catullus or of Sappho please an old doting miser as they do a vigorous and amorous young man? Cleomenes, the son of Anaxandridas, being sick, his friends reproached him that he had humors and whimsies that were new and unaccustomed: “I believe it,” said he, “neither am I the same man now as when I am in health: being now another thing, my opinions and fancies are also other than they were before.” In our courts of justice ’tis said of criminals, when they find the judges in a good humor, gentle and mild,

“Let him rejoice in his good fortune.”

For it is most certain that men’s judgments are sometimes more prone to condemnation, more sharp and severe, and at others more facile, easy, and inclined to excuse. He that carries with him from his house the pain of the gout, jealousy, or theft by his man, having his whole soul possessed with anger, it is not to be doubted but that his judgment will be warped in that direction. That venerable senate of the Areopagus was wont to hear and determine by night, for fear lest the sight of the parties might corrupt their

justice. The very air itself and the serenity of heaven will cause some mutation in us, according to the Greek verses rendered in Cicero:—

> “*Such are the minds of men, as Father Jupiter himself has shed light on the earth with his growing luminary.*”

’Tis not only fevers, debauches, and great accidents that overthrow our judgment; the least things in the world will do it; and we are not to doubt, though we are not sensible of it, but that if a continued fever can overwhelm the soul, a tertian will in some proportionate measure alter it; if an apoplexy can stupefy and totally extinguish the sight of our understanding, we are not to doubt but that a great cold will dazzle it; and consequently there is hardly a single hour in a man’s life wherein our judgment is in its due place and right condition, our bodies being subject to so many continual changes, and replete with so many several sorts of springs, that I believe what the physicians say, how hard it is but that there will not be always some one or other out of order.

As to what remains, this malady does not very easily discover itself, unless it be extreme and past remedy; forasmuch as reason goes always lame and halting, and that as well with falsehood as with truth; and therefore ’tis hard to discover her deviations and mistakes. I always call that appearance of meditation which every one forges in himself, reason: this reason, of the condition of which there may be a hundred contrary ones about the same subject, is an instrument of lead and wax, ductile, pliable, and accommodable to all sorts of biases and to all measures, so that nothing remains but the knowledge how to turn and mould it. How uprightly soever a judge may resolve to act, if he do not well look to himself, which few care to do, his inclination to friendship, to relationship, to beauty, or revenge, and not only things of that weight, but even the fortuitous instinct that makes us favor one thing more than another, and that, without the reason’s leave, puts the choice upon us in two equal subjects, or some other shadowy futility may insensibly insinuate into his judgment the recommendation or disfavor of a cause, and make the balance dip.

I, who watch myself as narrowly as I can, and who have my eyes continually bent upon myself, like one that has no great business elsewhere to do:—

> “*Alone secure, whatever king be dreaded in the frozen North, or what affrights Tiridates,*”

dare hardly tell the vanity and weakness I find in myself; my foot is so unstable and stands so slippery, I find it so apt to totter and reel, and my sight so disordered, that fasting I am quite another man than when full; if health and a fair day smile upon me, I am a very good fellow; if a corn trouble my toe, I am sullen, out of humor, and inaccessible. The same pace of a horse seems to me one while hard and another easy; the same way, one while shorter and another while longer; the same form, one while more and another while less taking. Now I am for doing everything, and then for doing nothing at all; what pleases me now would be a trouble to me at another time. I have a thousand senseless and casual humors within myself; either I am possessed by melancholy, or swayed by choler; and, by its own private authority, now sadness predominates in me, and now cheerfulness. When I take books, I have discovered admirable graces in such and such passages, and such as have struck my soul: let me light upon them at another time, I may turn and toss, tumble and rattle the leaves to much purpose; 'tis then to me a shapeless and incongruous mass. Even in my own writings, I do not always find the air of my first fancy: I know not what I meant to say; and am often put to it to correct and pump for a new sense, because I have lost the first, that was better. I do nothing but go and come: my judgment does not always advance; it floats and wanders:—

"Like a small bark surprised upon the great sea, when the winds ruffle it."

Very often, as I am apt to do, having for sport and exercise undertaken to maintain an opinion contrary to my own, my mind bending and applying itself that way, so strongly engages me there, that I no longer discern the reason of my former belief, and forsake it. I am, as it were, drawn on to the side to which I lean, be it what it will, and carried away by my own weight.

Every one would almost say the same of himself, if he considered himself as I do; preachers very well know that the emotions which steal upon them in speaking animate them towards belief; and in a passion we are more stiff in the defence of our proposition, receive a deeper impression of it and embrace it with greater vehemence and approbation, than we do in our colder and more temperate senses. You give your counsel a simple brief of your cause; he returns you a dubious and uncertain answer: you feel that he is indifferent which side he takes: have you fee'd him well that he may consider it the better? does he begin to be really concerned? and do you find him truly interested and zealous in your quarrel? His reason and learning

will by degrees grow hot in your cause; a manifest and undoubted truth presents itself to his understanding; he discovers an altogether new light in your business, and does in good earnest believe and persuade himself that it is so. Nay, I do not know whether the ardor that springs from spite and obstinacy, against the power and violence of the magistrate and danger, or the interest of reputation, may not have made some men, even to the stake, maintain the opinion for which, at liberty and amongst friends, he would not have burned the tip of his finger. The shocks and jostles that the soul receives from the passions of the body can do much in it, but its own can do a great deal more; to the which it is so subjected that, peradventure, it may be established that it has no other pace and motion but from the breath of those winds, without the agitation of which it would be becalmed and without action, like a ship in the open sea, to which the winds have denied their assistance: and whoever should maintain this, siding with the Peripatetics, would do us no great wrong, seeing it is very well known that most of the finest actions of the soul proceed from and stand in need of this impulse of the passions; valor, they say, cannot be perfect without the assistance of anger:—

"Ajax was always brave, but bravest when in frenzy,"

neither do we encounter the wicked and the enemy vigorously enough if we be not angry; nay, the advocate has to inspire the judges with anger to obtain justice.

Strong desires moved Themistocles, moved Demosthenes, and have pushed on the philosophers to work, watching, and pilgrimages; they lead us to honor, learning, health, all very useful ends: and this weakness of the soul in suffering anxiety and trouble serves to breed in the conscience penitence and repentance, and to make us see in the scourge of God and political troubles the chastisement of our offences. Compassion is a spur to clemency; and prudence to preserve and govern ourselves is aroused by our fear; and how many brave actions have been born of ambition? how many by presumption? In a word, there is no eminent and sprightly virtue without some irregular agitation. Should not this be one of the reasons that moved the Epicureans to discharge God from all care and solicitude of our affairs, because even the effects of His goodness could not be exercised in our behalf, without disturbing His repose, by the means of passions, which are so many spurs and instruments pricking on the soul to virtuous actions? or

have they thought otherwise, and taken them for tempests that shamefully hurry the soul from her tranquillity?—

> *"As it is understood to be a calm at sea when there is not the least breath of air stirring, so the state of the soul is discerned to be quiet and appeased when there is no perturbation to move it."*

What varieties of sense and reason, what contrarieties of imaginations, do the diversities of our passions present to us? What assurance, then, can we take of a thing so mobile and unstable, subject, by its conditions, to the dominion of trouble, and never going other than a forced and borrowed pace? If our judgment be in the power even of sickness and perturbation; if it be from craze and temerity that it has to receive the impression of things, what security can we expect from it?

Is it not a great boldness in philosophy to believe that men perform the greatest actions, those nearest approaching the divinity, when they are furious, mad, and beside themselves? we are to better ourselves by the deadening and privation of our reason; the two natural ways to enter into the cabinet of the gods, and there to foresee the course of destiny, are fury and sleep: this is pleasant to consider; by the dislocation that passions cause in our reason, we become virtuous; by its extirpation, occasioned by fury, or the image of death, we become diviners and prophets. I was never so willing to believe philosophy in anything as in this. 'Tis a pure enthusiasm wherewith sacred truth has inspired the spirit of philosophy, which makes it confess, contrary to its own proposition, that the most calm, composed, and healthful estate of the soul that philosophy can seat it in, is not its best condition: our wisdom is less wise than folly: our dreams are worth more than our meditation: the worst place we can take is in ourselves. But does not philosophy think that we are wise enough to remark that the voice that the spirit utters, when dismissed from man, so clear-sighted, so grand, so perfect, and, whilst it is in man, so terrestrial, ignorant, and obscure, is a voice proceeding from the spirit which is in obscure, terrestrial, and ignorant man, and, for this reason, a voice not to be trusted and believed?

I have no great experience of these vehement agitations, being of a soft and heavy complexion, the most of which surprise the soul on a sudden, without giving it leisure to recollect itself: but the passion that is said to be produced by idleness in the hearts of young men, though it proceed leisurely and with a measured progress, evidently manifests to those who have tried to oppose its power, the violence our judgment suffers in the

alteration and conversion. I have formerly attempted to withstand and repel it; for I am so far from being one of those who invite vices, that I do not so much as follow them, if they do not haul me along: I perceived it to spring, grow, and increase in despite of my resistance, and at last, living and seeing as I was, wholly to seize and possess me, so that, as if newly roused from drunkenness, the images of things began to appear to me quite other than they were wont to be; I evidently saw the person I desired, grow and increase in advantages of beauty, and to expand and develop fairer by the influence of my imagination; the difficulties of my pursuit to grow more easy and smooth; and both my reason and conscience to be laid aside; but, this fire being evaporated, in an instant, as from a flash of lightning, I was aware that my soul resumed another kind of sight, another state, and another judgment; the difficulties of retreat appeared great and invincible, and the same things had quite another taste and aspect than the heat of desire had presented them to me. Which of these most probably? Pyrrho himself knows nothing about it. We are never without sickness: fevers have their hot and cold fits; from the effects of an ardent passion we fall into a shivering passion; as far as I had advanced, so much I retired:—

> *"As when the sea, rolling with alternate tides, now rushes on the land and foaming throws over the rocks its waves, and with its skirts overflows the extremity of the strand: now, with rapid motion, and sucking in the stones, rolled back with the tide in its retreat, and with the ebbing current leaves the shore."*

Now, from the knowledge of this volubility of mine, I have accidentally begot in myself a certain constancy of opinion, and have not much altered those that were first and natural in me: for what appearance soever there may be in novelty, I do not easily change, for fear of losing by the bargain: and since I am not capable of choosing, I take other men's choice, and keep myself in the state wherein God has placed me; I could not otherwise prevent myself from perpetual rolling. Thus have I, by the grace of God, preserved myself entire, without anxiety or trouble of conscience, in the ancient belief of our religion, amidst so many sects and divisions as our age has produced. The writings of the ancients, the best authors I mean, being full and solid, tempt and carry me which way almost they will: he that I am reading, seems always to have the most force, and I find that every one of them in turn has reason, though they contradict one another. The facility that good wits have of rendering everything they would recommend likely,

and that there is nothing so strange to which they will not undertake to give color enough to deceive such a simplicity as mine, this evidently shows the weakness of their testimony. The heavens and the stars have been three thousand years in motion; all the world were of that belief till Cleanthes the Samian, or, according to Theophrastus, Nicetas of Syracuse, bethought him to maintain that it was the earth that moved, turning about its axis by the oblique circle of the zodiac; and in our time Copernicus has so grounded this doctrine, that it very regularly serves to all astrological consequences: what use can we make of this, except that we need not much care which is the true opinion? And who knows but that a third, a thousand years hence, may overthrow the two former?—

> *"Thus revolving time changes the seasons of things; that which was once in estimation becomes of no reputation at all, while another thing succeeds and bursts forth from contempt, is daily more sought, and, when found, flourishes among mankind with praises and wonderful honor."*

So that when any new doctrine presents itself to us, we have great reason to mistrust it, and to consider that before it was set on foot the contrary had been in vogue; and that as that has been overthrown by this, a third invention in time to come may start up which may knock the second on the head. Before the principles that Aristotle introduced were in reputation, other principles contented human reason, as these satisfy us now. What letters-patent have these, what particular privilege, that the career of our invention must be stopped by them, and that to them should appertain for all time to come the possession of our belief? They are no more exempt from being thrust out of doors than their predecessors were. When any one presses me with a new argument, I ought to consider that what I cannot answer, another may: for to believe all likelihoods that a man cannot himself confute is great simplicity; it would by that means come to pass that all the vulgar, and we are all of the vulgar, would have their belief as turnable as a weathercock: for the soul, being so easily imposed upon and without resisting power, would be forced incessantly to receive other and other impressions, the last still effacing all footsteps of that which went before. He that finds himself weak, ought to answer as in law questions, that he will speak with his counsel; or will refer himself to the wise from whom he received his teaching. How long is it that physic has been practised in the world? 'Tis said that a new comer, called Paracelsus,

changes and overthrows the whole order of ancient rules, and maintains that till now it has been of no other use but to kill men. I believe that he will easily make this good; but I do not think it were wisdom to venture my life in making trial of his new experiments. We are not to believe every one, says the precept, because every one can say all things. A man of this profession of novelties and physical reformations, not long since told me that all the ancients were notoriously mistaken in the nature and motions of the winds, which he would evidently demonstrate to me, if I would give him the hearing. After I had with some patience heard his arguments, which were all full of likelihood of truth: “What then,” said I, “did those that sailed according to Theophrastus, make way westward when they had the prow towards the east! did they go sideward or backward?” “That was according to fortune,” answered he; “but be that as it may, they were mistaken.” I then replied that I had rather follow effects than reason. Now these things often clash, and I have been told that in geometry, which pretends to have gained the highest point of certainty among all the sciences, there are found inevitable demonstrations that subvert the truth of all experience: as Jacques de Pelletier told me at my own house, that he had found out two lines stretching themselves one towards the other to meet, which, nevertheless, he affirmed, though extended to all infinity, could never reach to touch one another. And the Pyrrhonians make no other use of their arguments and their reason than to ruin the appearance of experience; and ’tis a wonder how far the suppleness of our reason has followed them in this design of controverting the evidence of effects: for they affirm that we do not move, that we do not speak, and that there is neither weight nor heat, with the same force of argument, that we affirm the most likely things. Ptolemy, who was a great man, had established the bounds of this world of ours: all the ancient philosophers thought they had the measure of it, excepting some remote isles that might escape their knowledge; it had been Pyrrhonism, a thousand years ago, to doubt the science of cosmography, and the opinions that every one had thence received: it was heresy to believe in Antipodes; and behold! in this age of ours there is an infinite extent of terra firma discovered, not an island or a particular country, but a part very nearly equal in greatness to that we knew before. The geographers of our times stick not to assure us, that now all is found, all is seen:—

“For what is present pleases, and seems to prevail.”

But the question is whether, if Ptolemy was therein formerly deceived, upon the foundations of his reason, it were not very foolish to trust now in what these later people say: and whether it is not more likely that this great body, which we call the world, is not quite another thing than what we imagine.

Plato says that it changes its aspect in all respects; that the heavens, the stars, and the sun have all of them sometimes motions retrograde to what we see, changing east into west. The Egyptian priests told Herodotus, that from the time of their first king, which was eleven thousand and odd years before (and they showed him the effigies of all their kings in statues taken from the life), the sun had four times altered his course: that the sea and the earth alternately change into one another: that the beginning of the world is undetermined: Aristotle and Cicero both say the same; and one amongst us is of opinion that it has been from all eternity, is mortal, and renewed again by successive vicissitudes, calling Solomon and Isaiah to witness: and this to evade these objections that God has once been a creator without a creature; that He had had nothing to do; that He abandoned this idleness by putting His hand to this work; and that, consequently, He is subject to changes. In the most famous of the Greek schools, the world is taken for a god, made by another god greater than he, and is composed of a body, and of a soul fixed in his centre, and dilating himself, by musical numbers, to his circumference: divine, infinitely happy, infinitely great, infinitely wise, and eternal: in him are other gods, the sea, the earth, the stars, who entertain one another with a harmonious and perpetual agitation and divine dance: sometimes meeting, sometimes retiring; concealing, discovering themselves; changing their order, one while before, and another behind. Heraclitus was positive that the world was composed of fire, and, by the order of destiny, was one day to be enflamed and consumed in fire, and then to be again renewed. And Apuleius says of men:—

“That they are mortal in particular, and immortal in general.”

Alexander wrote to his mother the narration of an Egyptian priest, drawn from their monuments, testifying the antiquity of that nation to be infinite, and comprising the birth and progress of other countries. Cicero and Diodorus say, that in their time, the Chaldeans kept a register of four hundred thousand and odd years: Aristotle, Pliny, and others, that Zoroaster flourished six thousand years before Plato’s time. Plato says that they of the city of Sais have records in writing of eight thousand years, and that the city

of Athens was built a thousand years before the said city of Sais. Epicurus, that at the same time things are here as we see them, they are alike and in the same manner in several other worlds; which he would have delivered with greater assurance had he seen the similitudes and concordances of the new discovered world of the West Indies, with ours present and past, in so many strange examples.

In earnest, considering what has arrived at our knowledge from the course of this terrestrial polity, I have often wondered to see in so vast a distance of places and times such a concurrence of so great a number of popular and wild opinions, and of savage manners and beliefs, which by no tendency seem to proceed from our natural meditation. Human wit is a great worker of miracles. But this relation has in it circumstances especially extraordinary; ’tis found to be in names also and a thousand other things: for they discovered nations there that, for aught we know, never heard of us, where circumcision was in use: where there were states and great civil governments maintained by women only, without men; where our fasts and Lent were represented, to which was added the abstinence from women: where our crosses were several ways in repute: here they were made use of to honor and adorn their sepultures; there they were erected, and notably that of St. Andrew, to protect people from nocturnal visions, and to lay upon the cradles of infants against enchantments; elsewhere there was found one of wood, of very great stature, which was adored as the god of rain, and this a long way into the main land, and there was also seen an express image of our shriving-priests, with the use of mitres, the celibacy of the priesthood, the art of divination by the entrails of sacrificed beasts, abstinence from all sorts of flesh and fish in their diet, the custom of priests officiating in a particular and not the vulgar language: and this fancy, that the first god was expelled by a second, his younger brother: that men were created with all sorts of conveniences, which have since been taken from them for their sins, their territory changed, and their natural condition made worse: that they were of old overwhelmed by the inundation of waters from heaven; that but few families escaped, who retired into the caves of high mountains, the mouths of which they stopped so that the waters could not get in, having shut up, together with themselves, several sorts of animals; that when they perceived the rain to cease, they sent out dogs, which returning clean and wet, they judged that the water was not much abated; afterward, sending out others, and seeing them return dirty, they issued out to repeople the world,

which they found only full of serpents. In one place some found the persuasion of a day of judgment, insomuch that the people were marvellously displeased with the Spaniards for disturbing the bones of the dead in rifling the sepultures for riches, saying that those bones, so disordered, could not easily rejoin; traffic by exchange, and no other way; fairs and markets for that end; dwarfs and deformed people for the ornament of the tables of princes; the use of falconry, according to the nature of their hawks; tyrannical subsidies; great refinements in gardens; dances, tumbling tricks, music of instruments, coats of arms, tennis-courts, dice and game of hazard, wherein they are sometimes so eager and hot, as to stake and play themselves and their liberty; physic, no otherwise than by charms; the way of writing in cypher; the belief of only one first man, the father of all nations; the adoration of a god, who formerly lived a man in perfect virginity, fasting and penitence, preaching the law of Nature and the ceremonies of religion, and who vanished from the world without a natural death; the belief in giants; the custom of making themselves drunk with their beverages and drinking to the utmost; religious ornaments painted with bones and dead men’s skulls; surplices, holy water sprinkling; wives and servants who present themselves with emulation to be burned and interred with the dead husband or master; a law by which the eldest succeeds to all the estate, no other portion being left for the younger but obedience; the custom that upon promotion to a certain office of great authority, the promoted is to take upon him a new name and to leave that he had before: another, to strew lime upon the knee of the new-born child, with these words, “From dust thou camest, and to dust thou must return:” the art of augury. These vain shadows of our religion, which are observable in some of these examples, are testimonies of its dignity and divinity; not only has it in some sort insinuated itself into all the infidel nations on this side of the world, by a certain imitation, but into these barbarians also, as by a common and supernatural inspiration; for we found there the belief of purgatory, but of a new form; that which we give to the fire they give to the cold, and imagine that souls are both purged and punished by the rigor of an excessive coldness. And this example puts me in mind of another pleasant diversity: for as there were, on the one hand, found people who took a pride to unmuffle the glans of their members, and clipped off the prepuce after the Mahommedan and Jewish manner, there were others who made so great a scruple about laying it bare, that they carefully pursed it up with little

strings to keep that end from peeping into the air; and of this other diversity, that whereas we, to honor kings and festivals, put on the best clothes we have, in some of these regions, to express their disparity and submission to their king, his subjects present themselves before him in their vilest habits, and, entering his palace, throw some old tattered garment over their better apparel, to the end that all the lustre and ornament may solely remain in him. But to proceed.

If Nature enclose within the bounds of her ordinary progress, as well as all other things, the beliefs, judgments, and opinions of men: if they have their revolution, their season, their birth and death, like cabbages; if the heavens agitate and rule them at their pleasure, what magisterial and permanent authority are we to attribute to them? If we experimentally see that the form of our being depends upon the air, upon the climate, and upon the soil where we are born, and not only the color, the stature, the complexion, and the countenances, but moreover the very faculties of the soul itself:—

> *"The climate is of great efficacy, not only to the strength of bodies, but to that of minds also,"*

says Vegetius; and that the goddess who founded the city of Athens chose to situate it in a temperature of air fit to make men sharp, as the Egyptian priests told Solon:—

> *"At Athens the air is thin; whence also the Athenians are reputed to be more acute: at Thebes more thick, therefore the Thebans are looked upon as fatter-headed and stronger of body,"*

so that as fruits and animals are born differing, men should also be born more or less warlike, just, temperate, and docile; here given to wine, elsewhere to theft or lechery; here inclined to superstition, elsewhere to misbelief; in one place to liberty, in another to servitude; capable of one science or of one art; dull or ingenious, obedient or mutinous, good or ill, according as the place where they are seated inclines them; and assume a new complexion, if removed like trees: which was the reason why Cyrus would not grant the Persians leave to quit their rough and craggy country to remove to another more pleasant and level, saying, that soft and fertile soils made men effeminate and unfertile. If we see one while one art, one belief flourish, and another while another, through some celestial influence: such an age produce such natures and incline mankind in such and such a direction: the spirits of men one while gay and another grum, like our

fields: what becomes of all those fine prerogatives we so soothe ourselves with? Seeing that a wise man may be mistaken, a hundred men, a hundred nations, nay, that even human nature itself, as we believe, is many ages wide in one thing or another, what assurance have we that she sometimes is not mistaken, or not in this very age of ours?

Methinks, amongst other testimonies of our imbecility, this ought not to be forgotten, that man cannot, by his own wish and desire, find out what is necessary for him; that, not in fruition only, but in imagination and wish, we cannot agree about what we would have to content us. Let us leave it to our thought to cut out and make up at its pleasure: it cannot so much as covet what is proper for it, and satisfy itself:—

Judgment of Modas. From painting by Theodor Grosse.

“For what with reason do we fear or wish? What is there dexterously conceived that afterwards you do not repent, both the attempt and even the success?”

And therefore it was that Socrates begged nothing of the gods but what they knew to be best for him; and the, both private and public, prayers of the Lacedaemonians were only simply to obtain good and useful things, referring the choice and selection of these to the discretion of the Supreme Power:—

> *“We seek marriage and the lying-in of the wife; but it is known to them (the gods) what the children and wife will be;”*

and Christians pray to God “that His will may be done:” that they may not fall into the inconvenience the poets feign of King Midas. He prayed to the gods that all he touched might be turned into gold; his prayer was heard; his wine was gold, his bread was gold, the feathers of his bed, his shirt and

clothes were all turned into gold, so that he found himself overwhelmed under the fruition of his desire, and enriched with an intolerable commodity, and was fain to unpray his prayers:—

"Astonished at the strangeness of the evil, at once rich and wretched, he wishes now to escape wealth, and hates the thing for which he had just prayed."

To instance in myself: when young, I desired of fortune above all things the order of St. Michael, which was then the utmost distinction of honor amongst the French noblesse, and very rare. She pleasantly gratified my longing; instead of raising me and lifting me up from my own place to attain it, she was much kinder to me, for she brought it so low and and made it so cheap that it stooped down to my shoulders, and lower. Cleobis and Biton, Trophonius and Agamedes, having requested, the first of their goddess, the last of their god, a recompense worthy of their piety, had death for a reward; so differing are the heavenly opinions concerning what is fit for us from our own. God might grant us riches, honors, life, and health itself, sometimes to our hurt; for everything that is pleasing to us is not always good for us. If he send us death or an increase of sickness, instead of a cure: —

"Thy rod and thy staff have comforted me."

He does it by the reasons of His providence, which better and more certainly discerns what is proper for us than we can do; and we ought to take it in good part, as coming from a wise and most friendly hand:

"If you wish advice, you will let the gods consider what is useful for us and our affairs, for man is dearer to them than he is to himself:"

for to require from them honors or commands is to ask them to throw you into a battle, set you upon a cast at dice, or something of the like nature, whereof the issue is to you unknown and the fruit doubtful.

There is no so sharp and violent dispute amongst the philosophers, as about the question of the sovereign good of man; out of which, by the calculation of Varro, there arose two hundred and four score and eight sects: —

"For whoever enters into controversy concerning the supreme good, disputes upon the whole reason of philosophy."

"Three guests of mine wholly differ, each man's palate requiring something that the others do not like. What am I to give? What not

give? You refuse what the others desire: what you seek the two others say is odious and sour:"

nature should say the same to their contests and debates. Some say that our well-being lies in virtue, others in pleasure, others in our submitting to nature; one in knowledge, another in being exempt from pain; another, in not suffering ourselves to be carried away by appearances: and this fancy seems to have relation to that of the ancient Pythagoras:—

- "Not to admire is all the art I know,
- To make men happy, and to keep them so;"

which is the point of the Pyrrhonian sect: Aristotle attributes the wondering at nothing to magnanimity, and Archesilaus said, that constancy and a right and inflexible state of judgment were the true goods, consent and application vices and evils; it is true that in being thus positive and establishing it by certain axiom, he quitted Pyrrhonism; for the Pyrrhonians, when they say that Ataraxy, which is the immobility of the judgment, is the sovereign good, do not design to say it affirmatively; but the same motion of the soul which makes them avoid precipices and take shelter from the evening damp, presents to them this fancy, and makes them refuse another.

How much do I wish, that whilst I live, either some other, or Justus Lipsius, the most learned man now living, of a most polished and judicious understanding, truly resembling my Turnebus, had the will and health and leisure sufficient candidly and carefully as possible to collect into a register, according to their divisions and classes, the opinions of ancient philosophy on the subject of our being and our manners; their controversies, the succession and reputation of the parts, the application of the lives of the authors and their disciples to their own precepts on memorable and exemplary occasions: what a beautiful and useful work that would be!

To continue: if it be from ourselves that we are to extract the rules of our manners, upon what a confusion are we thrown? for that which our reason advises us to as the most probable, is generally for every one to obey the laws of his country, as was the advice of Socrates, inspired, he tells us, by a divine counsel; and thence what results but that our duty has no other rule than what is accidental? Truth ought to have a like and universal visage: if man could know equity and justice that had a body and a true being, he would not fetter it to the conditions of this country or that; it

would not be from the whimsies of the Persians or Indians that virtue would receive its form. There is nothing more subject to perpetual agitation than the laws: since the time that I was born, I have known those of the English, our neighbors, three or four times changed, not only in matters of civil regimen, which is that wherein constancy may be dispensed with, but in the most important subject that can be, namely, religion: at which I am the more troubled and ashamed, because it is a nation with which those of my province have formerly had so great familiarity and acquaintance, that there yet remain in my house some traces of our ancient kindred. And here with us at home, I have known a thing that was a capital offence become lawful; and we who hold others to it, are likewise, according to the chances of war, in a possibility of being found one day guilty of high treason, both divine and human, should ever justice fall into the power of injustice, and, after a few years' possession, taking a quite contrary being. How could that ancient god more clearly accuse the ignorance of human knowledge concerning the Divine being, and give men to understand that their religion was but a thing of their own contrivance, useful to bind their society, than declaring as he did to those who came to his tripod for instruction, "that every one's true worship was that which he found in use in the place where he chanced to be?" O God, what infinite obligation have we to the benignity of our sovereign Creator, for having disabused our belief from these wandering and arbitrary devotions, and for having seated it upon the eternal foundation of His Holy Word? What will, then, philosophy say to us in this necessity? Why, "that we follow the laws of our country," that is to say, that floating sea of the opinions of a republic or a prince that will paint justice for me in as many colors and reform it as many ways as there are changes of passion in themselves: I cannot suffer my judgment to be so flexible. What kind of goodness is that which I see to-day in repute, and that to-morrow shall be in none, and which the crossing of a river makes a crime? What truth is it that these mountains enclose, and which is a lie in the world beyond them?

But they are pleasant, when to give some certainty to the laws, they say that there are some firm, perpetual and immutable, which they call natural, that are imprinted in mankind by the condition of their own proper being; and of these, some reckon up three, some four, some more, and some less, a sign that it is a mark as doubtful as the rest. Now they are so unfortunate (for what can I call it else but misfortune, that of so infinite a number of laws there should not be found one at least that fortune and the

temerity of chance has suffered to be universally received by the consent of all nations)?—they are, I say, so miserably unfortunate, that of these three or four select laws there is not so much as one that is not contradicted and disowned, not only by one nation but by many. Now the only likely sign by which they can argue or infer some laws to be natural is the universality of approbation; for we should, without doubt, follow by common consent that which nature had really ordained for us; and not only every nation, but every particular man would resent the force and violence that any one should do him, who would impel him to anything contrary to this law. Let them produce me but one of this condition. Protagoras and Aristo gave no other essence to the justice of laws than the authority and opinion of the legislator; and that, these put aside, the honest and the good would lose their qualities, and remain empty names of indifferent things: Thrasymachus in Plato is of opinion that there is no other law but the convenience of the superior. There is not anything wherein the world is so various as in laws and customs; such a thing is abominable here, which is elsewhere in esteem, as in Lacedaemon dexterity in stealing; marriages within degrees of consanguinity are capitally interdicted amongst us; they are elsewhere in honor:—

> *“ ’Tis said there are some nations where mothers marry their sons, fathers their daughters, and filial duty is enhanced by the double tie;”*

the murder of infants, the murder of fathers, community of wives, traffic in robberies, license in all sorts of voluptuousness; in short, there is nothing so extreme that is not allowed by the custom of some nation or other.

It is credible that there are natural laws, as we see in other creatures, but they are lost in us; this fine human reason everywhere so insinuating itself to govern and command, as to shuffle and confound the face of things, according to its own vanity and inconstancy:—

> *“Therefore nothing is any longer ours; what I call ours is artificial.”*

Subjects have divers aspects and divers considerations, and from this the diversity of opinions principally proceeds; one nation considers a subject in one aspect and stops there; another takes it in another aspect.

There is nothing of greater horror to be imagined than for a man to eat his father; and yet the nations whose custom anciently it was to do, looked

upon it as a testimony of piety and natural affection, seeking thereby to give their progenitors the most worthy and honorable sepulture; storing up in themselves, and as it were in their own marrow, the bodies and relics of their fathers; and in some sort vivifying and regenerating them by transmutation into their living flesh, by means of nourishment and digestion: it is easy to consider what a cruelty and abomination it must have appeared to men possessed and embued with this superstition, to throw their father's remains to the corruption of the earth and the nourishment of beasts and worms.

Lycurgus considered in theft the vivacity, diligence, boldness, and dexterity of purloining anything from our neighbors, and the utility that redounded to the public that every one should look more narrowly to the conservation of what was his own; and believed that from this double institution of assailing and defending advantage was to be made for military discipline (which was the principal science and virtue to which he would inure that nation) of greater consideration than the disorder and injustice of taking another man's goods.

Dionysius the tyrant offered Plato a robe of the Persian fashion, long, damasked, and perfumed; Plato refused it, saying that, being born a man, he would not willingly dress himself in woman's clothes; but Aristippus accepted it, with this answer, that no accoutrement could corrupt a chaste courage. His friends reproaching him with meanness of spirit, for laying it no more to heart that Dionysius had spit in his face: "Fishermen," said he, "suffer themselves to be dashed with the waves of the sea from head to foot to catch a gudgeon." Diogenes was washing cabbages, and seeing him pass by: "If thou couldst live on cabbage," said he, "thou wouldst not fawn upon a tyrant," to whom Aristippus replied; "And if thou knewest how to live amongst men, thou wouldst not be washing cabbages." Thus reason finds appearance for divers effects: 'tis a pot with two ears that a man may take by the right or left:—

> "*War, O foreign land, thou bringest us; horses are armed for war, these herds threaten war: and yet these animals having long with patience borne the yoke and yielded to the reins before, there is hope of peace.*"

Solon, being importuned by his friends not to shed powerless and unprofitable tears for the death of his son: "It is for that reason that I the more justly shed them," said he, "because they are powerless and

unprofitable.” Socrates’ wife exasperated her grief by this circumstance; “Oh, how unjustly do these wicked judges put him to death!” “Why,” replied he, “hadst thou rather they should justly execute me?” We have our ears bored; the Greeks looked upon that as a mark of slavery. We retire in private to enjoy our wives; the Indians do it in public. The Scythians immolated strangers in their temples; elsewhere temples were a refuge:—

> *“Thence the popular fury, that every locality hates its neighbors’ gods, when it believes only the gods which it worships itself.”*

I have heard of a judge who, where he met with a sharp conflict betwixt Bartolus and Baldus, and some point discussed with many contrarieties, wrote in the margin of his notebook: “A question for a friend,” that is to say that truth was there so controverted and confused that in a like cause he might favor which of the parties he thought fit. ’Twas only for want of wit that he did not write, “A question for a friend” throughout; the advocates and judges of our time find bias enough in all causes to accommodate them to what they themselves think fit. In so infinite a science, depending upon the authority of so many opinions, and so arbitrary a subject, it cannot but be that an extreme confusion of judgments must arise. There is hardly any suit so clear wherein opinions do not very much differ; what one court has determined, another determines quite contrary, and itself also contrary at another time. By this license, which is a marvellous blemish on the ceremonious authority and lustre of our justice, we see frequent examples of persons not abiding by decrees, but running from judge to judge, and court to court, to decide one and the same cause.

As to the liberty of philosophical opinions concerning vice and virtue, ’tis not necessary to be expatiated upon, as therein are found many opinions that are better concealed than published to weak minds. Arcesilaus said, that in fornication it was no matter how or with whom it was committed:—

> *“And obscene pleasures, if nature requires, Epicurus thinks are not to be measured either by kind, place, or order, but by age and beauty. Neither are holy loves thought to be interdicted to the wise men —we are to inquire till what age young men are to be loved.”*

These two last Stoical quotations, and the reproach that Dicaearchus threw in the teeth of Plato himself upon this account, show how much the soundest philosophy indulges license and excess, very remote from common usage.

Laws derive their authority from possession and use: ’tis dangerous to trace them back to their beginning; they grow great and ennoble themselves, like our rivers, by running; follow them upward to their source, ’tis but a little spring, scarce discernible, that swells thus, and thus fortifies itself by growing old. Do but consult the ancient considerations that gave the first motion to this famous torrent, so full of dignity, awe and reverence; you will find them so light and weak that it is no wonder if these people, who weigh and reduce everything to reason, and who admit nothing by authority or upon trust, have their judgments very remote and differing from those of the public. It is no wonder, if people, who take their pattern from the first image of nature, should in most of their opinions, swerve from the common path: as, for example, few amongst them would have approved of the strict conditions of our marriages, and most of them have been for having women in common, and without obligation: they would refuse our ceremonies. Chrysippus said that a philosopher will make a dozen somersaults without his breeches for a dozen of olives; he would hardly have advised Callisthenes to have refused to Hippoclides the fair Agarista his daughter, for having seen him stand on his head upon a table. Metrocles let wind a little indiscreetly in disputation in the presence of his school, and kept himself hid in his own house for shame, till Crates coming to visit him, and adding to his consolations and reasons the example of his own liberty, falling to let wind with him who should let most, cured him of that scruple, and withal drew him to his own Stoical sect, more free than that more reserved one of the Peripatetics, of which he had been till then. That which we call decency, not to dare to do that in public which it is decent enough to do in private, the Stoics call folly; and to mince it and be so modest as to conceal and disown what nature, custom, and our desires publish and proclaim of our actions, they reputed a vice; but the others thought it was to undervalue the mysteries of Venus, to draw them out of her private temples to expose them to the view of the people, and that to bring them out from behind the curtain was to lose them. Modesty is a thing of weight; secrecy, reserve, circumspection are parts of esteem: that pleasure does very rightly when, under the visor of virtue, she desires not to be prostituted in the open streets, trodden under foot and exposed to the public view, wanting the dignity and convenience of her private cabinets. Hence some say that to put down public stews is not only to disperse fornication into all places that was

assigned to one, but moreover by the very difficulty to incite idlers to this vice:—

> *"Thou, Schaevinus, once Aufidia's husband, art now her gallant. He who was once your rival is now her husband. How is it that she who now pleases thee, being another's, did not please thee when thou wert her husband? Cannot you find your vigor where you are unmolested?"*

This experience diversifies itself in a thousand examples:—

> *"Not a man in the whole city, Caecilianus, would touch your wife gratis, while it was easy to do so: now that you have set guards upon her, there's a vast crowd of lovers after her. You are a clever man."*

A philosopher being taken in the very act, and asked what he was doing, coolly replied, "I am planting a man:" no more blushing to be so caught than if they had found him planting garlic.

It is, I suppose, out of tenderness and respect to the natural modesty of mankind that a great and religious author is of opinion that this act is so necessarily bound to privacy and shame that he cannot persuade himself there could be any absolute performance in those impudent embraces of the Cynics, but that they only made it their business to represent lascivious gestures to maintain the impudence of their schools' profession; and that to eject what shame had withheld it was afterwards necessary for them to withdraw into the shade. But he had not thoroughly examined their debauches: for Diogenes, playing the beast with himself in public, wished in the presence of all who saw him that he could fill his belly by that exercise. To those who asked him why he did not find out a more commodious place to eat in than the open street, he made answer, "Because I am hungry in the open street." The women philosophers who mixed with their sect, mixed also with their persons in all places without reservation: and Hipparchia was not received into Crates' society but upon conditions that she should in all things follow the uses and customs of his rule. These philosophers set a great price upon virtue, and renounced all other discipline but the moral: and yet in all their actions they attributed the sovereign authority to the election of their sage as above the laws, and gave no other curb to voluptuousness but moderation only, and the conservation of the liberty of others.

Heraclitus and Protagoras, forasmuch as wine seemed bitter to the sick and pleasant to the sound; the rudder crooked in the water and straight when

out, and such like contrary appearances as are found in subjects, thence argued that all subjects had in themselves the causes of these appearances; and that there was some bitterness in the wine which had sympathy with the sick man’s taste, and the rudder some bending quality, sympathizing with him who looks upon it in the water, and so of all the rest; which is as much as to say that all is in all things, and, consequently, nothing in any one, for where all is, there is nothing.

This opinion put me in mind of the experience we have, that there is no sense nor aspect of anything, whether bitter or sweet, straight or crooked, that human wit does not find out in the writings it undertakes to rummage over. Into the simplest, purest, and most perfect speaking that can possibly be, how many lies and falsities have we suggested? What heresy has not there found ground and testimony sufficient to set forth and defend itself? ’Tis on this account that the authors of such errors will never surrender this proof of the testimony of the interpretation of words. A person of dignity who would prove to me by authority the search of the philosopher’s stone wherein he was over head and ears engaged, alleged to me the other day five or six passages in the Bible upon which he said he first founded his attempt, for the discharge of his conscience (for he is a divine); and in truth the invention was not only amusing, but, moreover, very well accommodated to the defence of this fine science.

By this way the reputation of divining fables is acquired; there is no fortune-teller, if he have but this authority that people will condescend to turn over and curiously peep into all the folds and glosses of his words, but we may make him, like the Sybils, say what we will. There are so many ways of interpretation that it will be hard but that, either obliquely or in a direct line, an ingenious wit will find out in every subject some air that will serve for his purpose: therefore ’tis we find a cloudy and ambitious style in so frequent and ancient use. Let the author but contrive to attract and busy posterity about his predictions; which not only his own parts, but as much or more the accidental favor of the matter itself, may effect; that, as to the rest, he express himself foolishly or subtlely, somewhat obscurely and contradictorily, ’tis no matter: a number of wits, shaking and sifting him, will bring out a great many several forms, either according to his own, or collateral, or contrary to it, which will all redound to his honor: he will see himself enriched, by the means of his disciples, like the regents of colleges by their pupils at Landy. This is it which has given reputation to many

things of no worth at all; that has brought several writings into vogue, and given them the fame of containing all sorts of matter that can be desired; one and the same thing receiving a thousand and a thousand images and various considerations, even as many as we please.

Is it possible that Homer could design to say all that they make him say, and that he devised so many and so various figures as that divines, lawgivers, captains, philosophers, all sorts of men who treat of sciences, how variously and oppositely soever, should cite him, and support their arguments by his authority, as the sovereign master of all offices, works, and artisans; counsellor-general of all enterprises? Whoever has had occasion for oracles and predictions has there found sufficient to serve his turn. ’Tis wonderful how many and how admirable concurrences an intelligent person and a particular friend of mine has there found out in favor of our religion, and he cannot easily be put out of the conceit that this was Homer’s design: and yet he is as well acquainted with that author as any man whatever of our time; and so what he has found out there in favor of our religion, many anciently found there in favor of theirs. Do but observe how Plato is tumbled and tossed about: every one ennobling his own opinions by applying him to himself, makes him take what side he pleases; they draw him in and engage him in all the new opinions the world receives, and make him, according to the different course of things, differ from himself; they make him, according to their sense, disavow the manners and customs lawful in his age, because they are unlawful in ours: and all this with vivacity and power, according to the force and sprightliness of the wit of the interpreter. From the same foundation that Heraclitus and this sentence of his had, “that all things have in them those forms that we discern in them,” Democritus drew a quite contrary conclusion—namely, “that subjects had nothing at all in them of what we there find;” and, forasmuch as honey is sweet to one and bitter to another, he thence argued that it was neither sweet nor bitter. The Pyrrhonians would say that they know not whether it is sweet or bitter, or neither the one nor the other, or both; for these always gain the highest point of dubitation. The Cyrenaics held that nothing was perceptible from without, and that that only was perceptible which internally touched us, as grief and pleasure; acknowledging neither tone nor color, but certain affections only that we receive from them, and that man’s judgment had no other seat. Protagoras believed that “what seemed to every one was true to every one.” The

Epicureans lodged all judgment in the senses, both in the knowledge of things and in pleasure. Plato would have the judgment of truth, and truth itself, derived from opinions and the senses, appertain to the mind and cogitation.

This discourse has put me upon the consideration of the senses, in which lie the greatest foundation and proof of our ignorance. Whatsoever is known is doubtless known by the faculty of the knower; for seeing the judgment proceeds from the operation of him who judges, 'tis reason that he perform this operation by his means and will, not by the constraint of another, as would happen if we knew things by the power and according to the law of their essence. Now all knowledge is conveyed to us by the senses; they are our masters:—

> *"It is the path by which faith finds its way to enter the human heart and the temple of the mind:"*

science begins by them, and is resolved into them. After all, we should know no more than a stone, if we did not know that there is sound, odor, light, taste, measure, weight, softness, hardness, sharpness, color, smoothness, breadth, and depth; these are the platform and principles of all the structure of our knowledge, and, according to some, science is nothing else but sensation. He that could make me contradict the senses would have me by the throat, he could not make me go further back; the senses are the beginning and the end of human knowledge:—

> *"You will find that all knowledge of truth is first conveyed to the soul by the senses. The senses cannot be disputed. What can be held in greater faith than them?"*

Attribute to them the least we can, we must still of necessity grant them this, that it is by their means and mediation that all our instruction is directed. Cicero says, that Chrysippus, having attempted to depreciate the force and virtue of the senses, presented to himself arguments and so vehement oppositions to the contrary, that he could not satisfy them; whereupon Carneades, who maintained the contrary side, boasted that he would make use of the same words and arguments that Chrysippus had done wherewith to controvert him, and therefore thus cried out against him: "O miserable! thy force has destroyed thee." There can, in our estimate, be nothing absurd to a greater degree than to maintain that fire does not warm, that light does not shine, and that there is no weight nor solidity in iron,

which are knowledges conveyed to us by the senses; there is no belief or knowledge in man that can be compared to that for certainty.

The first consideration I have upon the subject of the senses is, that I make a doubt whether man is furnished with all natural senses. I see several animals that live an entire and perfect life, some without sight, others without hearing: who knows whether to us also one, two, or three, or many other senses, may not be wanting? For if any one be wanting, our examination cannot discover the defect. 'Tis the privilege of the senses to be the utmost limit of our discovery; there is nothing beyond them that can assist us in exploration, not so much as one sense in the discovery of another:—

> *"Can ears correct the eyes, or eyes the touch, or can touch be checked by tasting; or can nose or eyes confute other faculties?"*

they all constitute the extremest limits of our ability:—

> *"Each has its own special power assigned to it, and its strength is its own."*

It is impossible to make a man, naturally blind, conceive that he does not see; impossible to make him desire sight, or to regret his defect: for which reason we ought not to derive any assurance from the soul's being contented and satisfied with those we have, considering that it cannot be sensible herein of its infirmity and imperfection, if there be any such thing. It is impossible to say anything to this blind man, either by argument or similitude, that can possess his imagination with any apprehension of light, color, or sight; nothing remains behind that can push on the senses to evidence. Those that are born blind, whom we hear to wish they could see, it is not that they understand what they desire: they have learned from us that they want something, that there is something to be desired that we have which they can name indeed, and speak of its effects and consequence; but yet they know not what it is, nor at all apprehend it.

I have seen a gentleman of a good family who was born blind, or at least blind from such an age that he knows not what sight is, who is so little sensible of his defect that he makes use, as we do, of words proper for seeing, and applies them after a manner wholly special and his own. They brought him a child to whom he was godfather; having taken him into his arms: "Good God," said he, "what a fine child is this: how beautiful to look upon, what a pleasant face he has!" He will say, like one of us, "This room has a very fine prospect; it is clear weather; the sun shines bright;" and,

moreover, hunting, tennis, and butts being our exercises, as he has heard, he has taken a liking to them, makes them his exercises, and believes he has as good a share of the sport as we have; and will express himself as angry or pleased as the best of us all, and yet knows nothing of it but by the ear. One cries out to him, “Here’s a hare,” when he is upon some even plain where he may safely ride; and afterwards, when they tell him the hare is killed, he will be as proud of it as he hears others say they are. He will take a tennis-ball in his left hand and strike it away with the racket: he will shoot with a musket at random, and is contented with what his people tell him, that he is over or beside the mark.

Who knows whether all human kind commit not the like absurdity, for want of some sense, and that through this default the greatest part of the face of things is concealed from us? What do we know but that the difficulties which we find in several works of nature do not thence proceed? and that several effects of animals, which exceed our capacity, are not produced by the faculty of some sense that we are defective in? and whether some of them have not by this means a life more full and entire than ours? We seize an apple as it were with all our senses: we there find redness, smoothness, odor, and sweetness: but it may have other virtues besides these, as drying up or binding, to which no sense of ours can have any reference. Is it not likely that there are sentient faculties in nature that are fit to judge and discern what we call the occult properties in several things, as for the loadstone to attract iron; and that the want of such faculties is the cause that we are ignorant of the true essence of such things? ’Tis, peradventure, some particular sense that gives cocks to understand what hour it is at midnight and when it grows to be towards day, and that makes them crow accordingly; that teaches chickens, before they have any experience of what they are, to fear a sparrow-hawk, and not a goose or a peacock, though birds of a much larger size; that cautions them of the hostile quality the cat has against them, and makes them not fear a dog; to arm themselves against the mewing, a kind of flattering voice, of the one, and not against the barking, a shrill and threatening voice, of the other; that teaches wasps, ants, and rats to select the best pear and the best cheese, before they have tasted them, and which inspires the stag, the elephant, the serpent, with the knowledge of a certain herb proper for their cure. There is no sense that has not a mighty dominion, and that does not by its power introduce an infinite number of knowledges. If we were defective in the

intelligence of sounds, of harmony, and of the voice, it would cause an unimaginable confusion in all the rest of our science; for, besides what appertains to the proper effect of every sense, how many arguments, consequences, and conclusions do we draw as to other things, by comparing one sense with another? Let an understanding man imagine human nature originally produced without the sense of seeing, and consider what ignorance and trouble such a defect would bring upon him, what a darkness and blindness in the soul; he will see by that of how great importance to the knowledge of truth the privation of such another sense, or of two, or three, should we be so deprived, would be. We have formed a truth by the consultation and concurrence of our five senses; but, peradventure, we should have the consent and contribution of eight or ten, to make certain discovery of it in its essence.

The sects that controvert the knowledge of man, do it principally by the uncertainty and weakness of our senses; for since all knowledge is by their means and mediation conveyed unto us, if they fail in their report, if they corrupt or alter what they bring us from without, if the light which by them creeps into the soul be obscured in the passage, we have nothing else to hold by. From this extreme difficulty all these fancies proceed; “that every subject has in itself all we there find: that it has nothing in it, of what we think we there find;” and that of the Epicureans, “that the sun is no bigger than ’tis judged by our sight to be:”—

> *“But be it what it will, in our esteem, it is no bigger than it seems to our eyes;”*

“that the appearances, which represent a body great to him that is near, and less to him that is more remote, are both true:”—

> *“Yet we deny that the eye is deluded; do not then charge it with the mind’s fault;”*

and resolutely, “that there is no deceit in the senses; that we are to lie at their mercy, and seek elsewhere reasons to excuse the difference and contradictions we there find, even to the inventing of lies and other flams (they go that length) rather than accuse the senses.” Timagoras vowed that, by pressing or turning his eye, he could never perceive the light of the candle to double, and that the seeming so proceeded from the vice of opinion, and not from the organ. The most absurd of all absurdities, according to the Epicureans, is in denying the force and effect of the senses: —

"Therefore, whatever has to them at any time seemed true, is true, and if our reason cannot explain why things seem to be square when near, and at a greater distance appear round, 'tis better for him that's at fault in reasoning to give of each figure a false cause, than to permit manifest things to go out of his hands, to give the lie to his first belief, and overthrow all the foundations on which life and safety depend; for not alone reason, but life itself will fall together with sudden ruin, unless we dare trust our senses to avoid precipices, and other such like dangers that are to be avoided."

This so desperate and unphilosophical advice, expresses only this, that human knowledge cannot support itself but by reason that is unreasonable, foolish, and mad; but that it is better that man, to set a greater value upon himself, should make use of this or any other remedy how fantastic soever, than confess his necessary ignorance; a truth so disadvantageous to him. He cannot avoid owning that the senses are the sovereign lords of his knowledge; but they are uncertain and falsifiable in all circumstances; 'tis there that he is to fight it out to the last; and if his just forces fail him, as they do, supply that defect with obstinacy, temerity, and impudence. If what the Epicureans say be true, viz., "that we have no knowledge if the appearances of the senses be false;" and if that also be true which the Stoics say, "that the appearances of the senses are so false that they can furnish us with no manner of knowledge," we shall conclude, to the disadvantage of these two great dogmatical sects, that there is no science at all.

As to what concerns the error and uncertainty of the operation of the senses, every one may furnish himself with as many examples as he pleases; so ordinary are the faults and tricks they put upon us. In the echo of a valley the sound of the trumpet seems to meet us, which comes from some place behind:—

"And mountains rising up at a distance from the middle of the sea, between which a free passage for ships is open, yet appear, though far separated, one vast island united of the two, . . . and the hills and plains, past which we row or sail, seem to flee away astern. When a spirited horse sticks fast with us in the middle of a river, and we look down into the stream, the horse seems to be carried by its force in a contrary direction, though he stands still:"

just as a musket bullet under the forefinger, the middle finger being lapped over it, feels so like two that a man will have much ado to persuade

himself there is but one, the senses so vividly representing them as two. For that the senses are very often masters of our reason and constrain it to receive impressions which it judges and knows to be false, is frequently seen. I set aside the sense of feeling, that has its functions nearer, more vivid and substantial, that so often by the effect of the pains it inflicts on the body subverts and overthrows all those fine Stoical resolutions, and compels him to cry out from his belly who has resolutely established this doctrine in his soul, “that the gout and all other pains and diseases are indifferent things, not having the power to abate anything of the sovereign felicity wherein the sage is seated by his virtue;” there is no heart so effeminate that the rattle and sound of our drums and trumpets will not enflame with courage; nor so sullen that the sweetness of music will not rouse and cheer; nor a soul so stubborn that will not feel itself struck with some reverence in considering the sombre vastness of our churches, the variety of ornaments and order of our ceremonies, and in hearing the solemn music of our organs, and the grace and devout harmony of our voices; even those, who come in with contempt, feel a certain shivering in their hearts, and something of dread that makes them begin to doubt their opinion. For my part, I do not find myself strong enough to hear an ode of Horace or Catullus sung by a beautiful young mouth without emotion; and Zeno had reason to say that the voice is the flower of beauty. Some one once wanted to make me believe that a certain person, whom all we Frenchmen know, had imposed upon me in repeating some verses that he had made; that they were not the same upon the paper that they were in the air, and that my eyes would make a contrary judgment of them to my ears: so great a power has pronunciation to give fashion and value to works that are left to the efficacy and modulation of the voice. Therefore Philoxenus was not so much to blame who, hearing one give an ill accent to some composition of his, stamped on and broke certain earthen vessels of his, saying, “I break what is thine, because thou spoilest what is mine.” To what end did those men, who have with a positive resolution destroyed themselves, turn away their faces that they might not see the blow that was by themselves appointed? and that those who, for their health, desire and command incisions and cauteries, cannot endure the sight of the preparations, instruments, and operations of the surgeons, seeing that the sight is not in any way to participate in the pain?—are not these proper examples to verify the authority the senses have over the reason? ’Tis to

much purpose that we know these tresses were borrowed from a page or a lacquey; that this red came from Spain, and that white and polish from the ocean; our sight will nevertheless compel us to confess the object more agreeable and more lovely against all reason; for in this there is nothing of its own.

> *"We are carried away by dress; all things are hidden by jewels and gold; the girl is of herself the smallest part. Often, when amongst so many decorations we seek for her we love, wealthy love deceives our eyes with this mask."*

What a strange power do the poets attribute to the senses, who make Narcissus so desperately in love with his own shadow?—

> *"He admires all things by which he is admired: silly fellow, he desires himself; the praises which he gives, he claims; he seeks, and is sought; he is inflamed and inflames:"*

and Pygmalion's judgment so troubled by the impression of the sight of his ivory statue, that he loves and adores it, as if it were a living woman: —

> *"He kisses, and believes that he is kissed again, seizes her, embraces her; he thinks her limbs yield to the pressure of his fingers, and fears lest they should become black and blue with his ardor."*

Let a philosopher be put into a cage of small thin-set bars of iron, and hang him on the top of the high tower of Notre Dame of Paris; he will see, by manifest reason, that he cannot possibly fall, and yet he will find, unless he have been used to the tiler's trade, that he cannot help but that the excessive height will frighten and astound him; for we have enough to do to assure ourselves in the galleries of our steeples, if they are railed with an open baluster, although they are of stone; and some there are that cannot endure so much as to think of it. Let there be a beam thrown over betwixt these two towers, of breadth sufficient to walk upon; there is no philosophical wisdom so firm that can give us the courage to walk over it, as we should do upon the ground. I have often tried this upon our mountains in these parts, and though I am not one who am much subject to be afraid of such things, yet I was not able to endure to look into that infinite depth without horror and trembling in legs and arms, though I stood above my length from the edge of the precipice, and could not have fallen down unless I had chosen. I also observed that what height soever the precipice were provided there were some tree or some jutting out of a rock a little to

support and divide the sight, it a little eases our fears and gives some assurance, as if they were things by which in falling we might have some help; but that direct precipices we are not able to look upon without being giddy:—

“Not to be seen without dizziness of the eyes and mind:”

which is a manifest imposture of the sight. And therefore it was, that the fine philosopher put out his own eyes to free the soul from being diverted by them, and that he might philosophize at greater liberty: but by the same rule, he should have stopped up his ears, which Theophrastus says are the most dangerous instruments about us for receiving violent impressions to alter and disturb us; and, in short, should have deprived himself of all his other senses, that is to say, of his life and being; for they have all the power to command our soul and reason:—

> *“For it often falls out that minds are more vehemently struck by some sight, by the loud sound of the voice, or by singing, and ofttimes by grief and fear.”*

Physicians hold that there are certain complexions that are agitated by some sounds and instruments even to fury. I have seen some who could not hear a bone gnawed under the table without impatience; and there is scarce any man who is not disturbed at the sharp and shrill noise that the file makes in grating upon the iron; and so, to hear chewing near them or to hear any one speak who has any impediment in the throat or nose, will move some people even to anger and hatred. Of what use was that piping prompter of Gracchus, who softened, raised, and moved his master’s voice whilst he declaimed at Rome, if the movements and quality of the sound had not the power to move and alter the judgments of the auditory? Truly, there is wonderful reason to keep such a clutter about the firmness of this fine piece that suffers itself to be turned and twined by the motions and accidents of so light a wind!

The same cheat that the senses put upon our understanding, they have in turn put upon them; the soul also sometimes has its revenge; they lie and contend which should most deceive one another. What we see and hear when we are transported with passion, we neither see nor hear as it is:—

“The sun seemed two suns, and Thebes a double city:”

the object that we love appears to us more beautiful than it really is:—

> *“We often see the ugly and the vile held in highest honor and warmest love:”*

and that we hate, more ugly. To a discontented and afflicted man, the light of the day seems dark and overcast. Our senses are not only corrupted, but very often utterly stupefied by the passions of the soul; how many things do we see that we do not take notice of, if the mind be occupied with other thoughts?—

> "*Nay, as to the most distinct objects, you may observe that unless the mind take notice of them, they are no more seen than if they were far removed in time and distance;*"

it seems as though the soul retires within and amuses the powers of the senses. And so both the inside and the outside of man is full of infirmities and falsehood.

They who have compared our life to a dream were, peradventure, more in the right than they were aware of. When we dream, the soul lives, works, exercises all its faculties, neither more nor less than when awake; but if more gently and obscurely, yet not so much certainly, that the difference should be as great as betwixt night and the meridional brightness of the sun; nay, as betwixt night and shade; there she sleeps, here she slumbers, but whether more or less, 'tis still dark and Cimmerian darkness. We wake sleeping, and sleep waking. I do not see so clearly in my sleep; but as to my being awake, I never find it clear enough and free from clouds: moreover, sleep, when it is profound, sometimes rocks even dreams themselves asleep; but our awaking is never so sprightly that it rightly and thoroughly purges and dissipates those reveries which are waking dreams, and worse than dreams. Our reason and soul receiving those fancies and opinions that come in dreams, and authorizing the actions of our dreams, in like manner as they do those of the day, why do we not doubt whether our thought and action is not another sort of dreaming, and our waking a certain kind of sleep?

If the senses be our first judges, it is not our own that we are alone to consult; for in this faculty beasts have as great or greater, right than we: it is certain that some of them have the sense of hearing more quick than man, others that of seeing, others that of feeling, others that of touch and taste. Democritus said, that the gods and brutes had the sensitive faculties much more perfect than man. Now, betwixt the effects of their senses and ours, the difference is extreme; our spittle cleanses and dries up our wounds; it kills the serpent:—

“And in those things the difference is so great that what is one man’s poison is another man’s meat; for the serpent often, when touched with human spittle, goes mad, and bites itself to death.”

What quality do we attribute to our spittle, either in respect to ourselves or to the serpent? by which of the two senses shall we prove the true essence that we seek? Pliny says, that there are certain sea-hares in the Indies that are poison to us, and we to them, insomuch that with the least touch we kill them; which shall be truly poison, the man or the fish? which shall we believe, the fish of the man, or the man of the fish? One quality of the air infects a man that does the ox no harm; some other infects the ox but hurts not the man: which of the two shall in truth and nature be the pestilent quality? To them who have the jaundice all things seem yellow and paler than to us:—

“Whatever jaundiced eyes view looks yellow.”

They who are troubled with the disease that the physicians call hyposphagma, which is a suffusion of blood under the skin, see all things red and bloody. What do we know but that these humors, which thus alter the operations of sight, predominate in beasts and are usual with them? for we see some whose eyes are yellow like our people who have the jaundice, and others of a bloody color; to these ’tis likely that the color of objects seems other than to us; which judgment of the two shall be right? for it is not said that the essence of things has a relation to man only: hardness, whiteness, depth, and sharpness have reference to the service and knowledge of animals as well as to us, and Nature has equally designed them for their use. When we press down the eye, the body that we look upon we perceive to be longer and more extended; many beasts have their eyes so pressed down: this length therefore is, peradventure, the true form of that body, and not that which our eyes give it in their usual state. If we close the lower part of the eye, things appear double to us:—

“Two lights in the lamps seem blossoming with flames, and each man appears to have a double body and two heads.”

If our ears be obstructed or the passage stopped with anything, we receive the sound quite otherwise than we usually do; the animals likewise, who have either the ears hairy or but a very little hole instead of an ear, do not, consequently, hear as we do, but another kind of sound. We see at festivals and theatres that painted glass of a certain color reflecting the light

of the flambeaux, and all things in the room appear to us green, yellow, or violet:—

> *"And thus yellow, red, and purple curtains, stretched over the spacious theatre, sustained by poles and pillars, wave about in the air, and whole streams of colors flow from the top, and tinge the scenes, and men, and women, and gods:"*

'tis likely that the eyes of animals, which we see to be of divers colors, produce the appearance of bodies to them the same with their eyes.

We should, therefore, to make a right judgment of the operations of the senses, be first agreed with beasts; and secondly, amongst ourselves, which we by no means are, but enter at every turn into dispute, seeing that one man hears, sees, or tastes something otherwise than another does; and contest as much as upon any other thing about the diversity of the images that the senses represent to us. A child, by the ordinary rule of nature, hears, sees, and tastes otherwise than a man of thirty years old, and he than one of threescore; the senses are in some more obscure and dusky, and in others more open and quick. We receive things variously, according as we are and according as they appear to us; now, our perception being so uncertain and controverted, it is no wonder if we are told that we may declare that snow appears white to us, but that to affirm that it is in its own essence really so, is more than we are able to justify: and this foundation being shaken, all the knowledge in the world must of necessity fall to pieces. Then our senses themselves hinder one another: a picture seems raised and embossed to the sight, in the handling it seems flat to the touch: shall we say that musk, which delights the smell and is offensive to the taste, is agreeable or no? There are herbs and unguents proper for one part of the body that are hurtful to another; honey is pleasant to the taste, but not pleasant to the sight. Those rings which are cut in the form of feathers, and which they call in device pennes sans fin, the eye cannot determine their size, or help being deceived by the imagination that on one side they are not larger, and on the other side become gradually narrower, and this even when you have them round the finger; yet when the touch comes to test them, it finds them of equal size and alike throughout. They who, to assist their lust, were wont in ancient times to make use of magnifying glasses to represent the members they were to employ larger than they were, and by ocular tumidity to please themselves the more: to which of the two senses did they give the prize, whether to the sight, that represented the members as large and great as they

would desire, or to the touch, which presented them little and contemptible? Are they our senses that supply the subject with these different conditions, and have the subjects themselves nevertheless but one? as we see in the bread we eat, it is nothing but bread, but by being eaten it becomes bones, blood, flesh, hair, and nails:—

> *"As meats diffused through all the members lose their former nature, and become a new substance;"*

the humidity sucked up by the root of a tree, becomes trunk, leaf, and fruit; and the air, being but one, is modulated in a trumpet to a thousand sorts of sounds: are they our senses, I would fain know, that in like manner form these subjects into so many divers qualities, or have they them really such in themselves; and, in the face of this doubt, what can we determine of their true essence? Moreover, since the accidents of disease, delirium, or sleep make things appear otherwise to us than they do to the healthful, the sane, and those that are awake, is it not likely that our right posture of health and understanding, and our natural humors, have also wherewith to give a being to things that have relation to their own condition, and to accommodate them to themselves, as well as when these humors are disordered; and our health as capable of giving them its aspect as sickness? Why has not the temperate a certain form of objects relative to it, as well as the intemperate; and why may it not as well stamp it with its own character as the other? He whose mouth is out of taste says the wine is flat; the healthful man commends its flavor, and the thirsty its briskness. Now, our condition always accommodating things to itself, and transforming them according to itself, we cannot know what things truly are in themselves, seeing that nothing comes to us but what is falsified and altered by the senses. Where the compass, the square, and the rule are crooked, all proportions drawn from them, all the buildings erected by those guides, must of necessity be also defective; the uncertainty of our senses renders everything uncertain that they produce:—

- "Denique ut in fabrica, si prava est regula prima
- Normaque si fallax rectis regionibus exit,
- Et libella aliqua si ex parti claudicat hilum;
- Omnia mendose fieri atque obstipa necessum est:
- Prava, cubantia, prona, supina, atque absona tecta:
- Jam ruere ut quaedam videantur velle, ruantque

- Prodita judiciis fallacibus omnia primis:
- Sic igitur ratio tibi rerum prava necesse est,
- Falsaque sit, falsis quaecumque a sensibus orta est.”

And, after all, who can be fit to judge of and to determine these differences? As we say, in controversies of religion, that we must have a judge neither inclining to the one side nor to the other, free from all choice and affection, which cannot be among Christians; just so it falls out in this; for if he be old, he cannot judge of the sense of old age, being himself a party in the case: if young, there is the same exception; healthful, sick, asleep, or awake, he is still the same incompetent judge: we must have some one exempt from all these qualities, so that without preoccupation of judgment, he may judge of these propositions as of things indifferent to him; and, by this rule, we must have a judge that never was.

To judge of the appearances that we receive of subjects, we ought to have a judicatory instrument; to prove this instrument, we must have demonstration; to verify this demonstration, an instrument: and here we are upon the wheel. Seeing the senses cannot determine our dispute, being themselves full of uncertainty, it must be reason that must do it; but no reason can be established but upon the foundation of another reason; and so we run back to all infinity. Our fancy does not apply itself to things that are foreign, but is conceived by the mediation of the senses, and the senses do not comprehend a foreign subject, but only their own passions; so that fancy and appearance are no part of the subject, but only of the passion and sufferance of the sense; which passion and subject are several things; wherefore, whoever judges by appearances, judges by another thing than the subject. And to say that the passions of the senses convey to the soul the quality of external subjects by resemblance: how can the soul and understanding be assured of this resemblance, having of itself no communication with the external subjects? as they who never knew Socrates cannot, when they see his portrait, say it is like him. Now, whoever would, notwithstanding, judge by appearances; if it be by all, it is impossible, because they hinder one another by their contrarieties and discrepancies, as we by experience see: shall some select appearances govern the rest? You must verify these select by another select, the second by the third, and, consequently, there will never be any end on’t. Finally, there is no constant existence, either of the objects’ being nor of our own:

both we and our judgment, and all mortal things, are evermore incessantly running and rolling, and, consequently, nothing certain can be established from the one to the other, both the judging and the judge being in a continual motion and mutation.

We have no communication with Being, by reason that all human nature is ever in the midst, betwixt being born and dying, giving but an obscure appearance and shadow, a weak and uncertain opinion of itself, and if, peradventure, you fix your thought to apprehend your being, it would be like grasping water; for the more you clutch your hand to squeeze and hold what is in its own nature flowing, so much the more you lose what you would grasp and hold. So, seeing that all things are subject to pass from one change to another, reason, that there looks for a real substance, finds itself deceived, not being able to apprehend anything that is subsistent and permanent, because that everything is either entering into being, and is not yet wholly arrived at it, or begins to die before it is born. Plato said, that bodies had never any existence, not even birth; conceiving that Homer had made the ocean and Thetis father and mother of the gods, to show us that all things are in a perpetual fluctuation, motion and variation: the opinion of all the philosophers, as he says, before his time, Parmenides only excepted, who would not allow things to have motion, on the power whereof he sets a mighty value. Pythagoras was of opinion that all matter was flowing and unstable: the Stoics, that there is no time present, and that what we call Present is nothing but the juncture and meeting of the future and the past: Heraclitus, that never any man entered twice into the same river: Epicharmus, that he who borrowed money but an hour ago, does not owe it now; and that he who was invited overnight to come the next day to dinner, comes nevertheless uninvited, considering that they are no more the same men, but are become others; and, “that there could not be found a mortal substance twice in the same condition: for, by the suddenness and quickness of change, it one while disperses and another reassembles; it comes and goes, after such a manner, that what begins to be born never arrives to the perfection of being, forasmuch as that birth is never finished and never stays as being at an end, but, from the seed, is evermore changing and shifting from one to another: as from human seed is first made in the mother’s womb a formless embryo, then a formed child, then, in due course, delivered thence a sucking infant: afterwards it becomes a boy, then a lad, then a man, then a middle-aged man, and at last a decrepid old man;

so that age and subsequent generation are always destroying and spoiling that which went before:"—

> "*For time changes the nature of the whole world, and one state gives all things a new state: nothing remains like itself, but all things range; nature changes everything.*"

"And yet we foolishly fear one kind of death, whereas we have already passed and daily pass so many others: for not only, as Heraclitus said, the death of fire is the generation of air, and the death of air the generation of water: but we may still more manifestly discern it in ourselves; the flower of youth dies and passes away, when age comes on; and youth is terminated in the flower of age of a full-grown man, infancy in youth, and the first age dies in infancy; yesterday died in to-day, and to-day will die in to-morrow; and there is nothing that remains in the same state, or that is always the same thing; and that it is so let this be the proof: if we are always one and the same, how comes it then to pass, that we are now pleased with one thing, and by and by with another? how comes it to pass that we love or hate contrary things, that we praise or condemn them? how comes it to pass that we have different affections, and no more retain the same sentiment in the same thought? For it is not likely that without mutation we should assume other passions; and that which suffers mutation does not remain the same, and if it be not the same, it is not at all: but the same that the being is, does, like it, unknowingly change and alter, becoming evermore another from another thing: and, consequently, the natural senses abuse and deceive themselves, taking that which seems for that which is, for want of well knowing what that which is, is. But what is it then that truly is eternal; that is to say, that never had beginning nor never shall have ending, and to which time can bring no mutation: for time is a mobile thing, and that appears as in a shadow, with a matter evermore flowing and running, without ever remaining stable and permanent: and to which those words appertain, Before, and After, Has been, or Shall be: which, at first sight, evidently show that it is not a thing that is; and it were a great folly, and an apparent falsity, to say that that is, which is not yet in being, or that has already ceased to be; and as to these words, Present, Instant, and Now, by which it seems that we principally support and found the intelligence of time, reason discovering, presently destroys it; for it immediately divides and splits it into the future and past, as, of necessity, considering it divided in two. The same happens to nature which is measured, as to time that

measures it: for she has nothing more subsisting and permanent than the other, but all things are therein either born, or being born, or dying. So that it were a sinful saying to say of God, who is He who only is, that He was or that He shall be: for those are terms of declension, passages and vicissitude of what cannot continue nor remain in being: wherefore we are to conclude that God only is, not according to any measure of time, but according to an immutable and motionless eternity, not measured by time, nor subject to any declension; before whom nothing was, and after whom nothing shall be, either more new or more recent, but a real Being, that with one sole Now fills the Forever, and there is nothing that truly is, but He alone, without one being able to say, He has been, or shall be, without beginning, and without end."

To this so religious conclusion of a pagan, I shall only add this testimony of one of the same condition, for the close of this long and tedious discourse, which would furnish me with endless matter. "O what a vile and abject thing," says he, "is man, if he do not raise himself above humanity?" 'Tis a good word, and a profitable desire, but equally absurd; for to make the handful bigger than the hand, and the armful larger than the arm, and to hope to stride further than our legs can reach, is impossible and monstrous; or that man should rise above himself and humanity: for he cannot see but with his eyes, nor seize but with his power. He shall rise if God extraordinarily lends him His hand; he shall rise by abandoning and renouncing his own proper means, and by suffering himself to be raised and elevated by means purely celestial. It belongs to our Christian faith, and not to his Stoical virtue, to pretend to that divine and miraculous metamorphosis.

Table of Contents

Cover
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE
APOLOGY FOR RAIMOND DE SEBONDE (Continued.)